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LE RÊVE

A NOVEL.

BY

EMILE ZOLA.

PHILADELPHIA:

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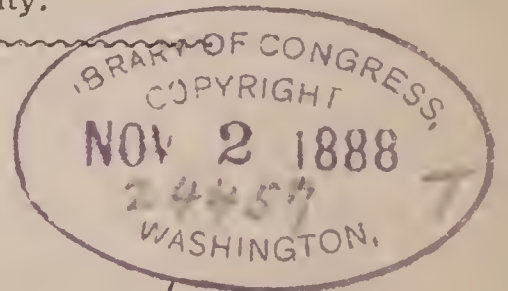
BY ÉMILE ZOLA.

AUTHOR OF "NANA," "L'ASSOMMOIR," "LA TERRE," "CLAUDE'S CONFESSION,"
"POT-BOUILLE," "THERESE RAQUIN," "HER TWO HUSBANDS," "ALBINE,"
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"THE SHOP-GIRLS OF PARIS," "THE JOYS OF LIFE,"
"A MAD LOVE," "THE FLOWER GIRLS OF MARSEILLES,"
"THE FLOWER AND MARKET GIRLS OF PARIS," ETC.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY GEORGE D. COX.

35

"LE REVE," the latest novel from the pen of the world-famous Emile Zola, is a wide departure from the line he has heretofore followed with such conspicuous success. He himself describes it as an entirely pure romance fit for even the most innocent young girls to read, and there is certainly nothing in it that can shock or do harm. The novel is quaint both in style and matter, but is characterized by great power and interest. The plot deals with the experiences of a poor, deserted girl, who is saved from perishing in a severe snow-storm at the Saint Agnes door of the cathedral in Beaumont, a French country town, by the Huberts, chasuble-makers, and is brought up by them. This girl, Angelique-Marie, is seized with a fit of religious fervor from reading the mysteries of the Golden Legend, which colors her life. In this novel Zola confines himself to telling a plain story in a plain way, now and then bringing on the scene a pathetic and touching incident well calculated to awaken all the sympathy of the reader. The characters are naturally and vividly drawn, and the language at times is quite poetic and beautiful. "LE REVE" will create for Zola a new circle of readers and arouse general curiosity.



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CONTENTS.

Chapter.	Page.
I. ANGÉLIQUE-MARIE.	21
II. THE GOLDEN LEGEND.	38
III. ANGÉLIQUE'S WISH.	66
IV. ON THE BALCONY.	88
V. FÉLICIEN.	110
VI. MONSEIGNEUR'S MITRE.	132
VII. IN ANGÉLIQUE'S CHAMBER.	152
VIII. THE PROCESSION OF THE MIRACLE.	168
IX. A CRUEL SHOCK.	188
X. MONSEIGNEUR.	206
XI. ANGÉLIQUE'S DESPAIR.	223
XII. THE VICTORY.	244
XIII. THE MIRACLE.	259
XIV. THE MARRIAGE.	276

READ THE NOTICES OF THE PRESS.

"Le Rêve," the new romance by the world-famous French novelist, Emile Zola, is an unusually striking and brilliant work. It will prove a decided surprise because it is as pure as it is absorbingly interesting. Like all Zola's other productions, its distinguishing characteristic is wonderful power, while it develops the same rare knowledge of human nature; but these are the limits of the similarity, for "Le Rêve" is a chaste idyl of life and love in one of the larger country towns of France, and while religious enthusiasm, passion, innocence and the supernatural are treated of, vice finds not so much as a solitary corner in the entire book. Angélique-Marie, the youthful heroine, with her refreshing faith in miracles and the saints, her devotion to the quaint "Golden Legend," and her ardent expectation of the prince-lover who is to come, is an adorable personage, and the story of her passion for the young and wealthy Félicien of Hauteœur is thoroughly fascinating from beginning to end. The cloistered life of Angélique-Marie and the Huberts, the natural home pictures, the wash-day on the banks of the Chevrotte in the Clos-Marie, the procession of the miracle, the scenes in the old cathedral and the ancient legends of the Hauteœurs, all unite in contributing a special and irresistible charm to this truly delightful novel. The characters are few, but very strongly drawn, and the plot, while simple, is sufficiently effective for the author's purpose. As a narration of the innocent love of a pure young girl, "Le Rêve" has no superior in any language. It is one of Zola's best books, and cannot fail to excite the highest admiration of the thousands who will read it.—PRESS.

"Le Rêve," Emile Zola's latest novel, is a wide departure from his usual line of work. It is a thoroughly pure romance and as powerful and absorbing as it is unobjectionable. Zola shows in its pages the same vast knowledge of the human heart and its emotions which have distinguished his previous fictions, but in this charming book only the chaste side is looked upon. "Le Rêve" is a love story in the fullest sense of the term, but a love story which, while ardent and passionate in the highest degree, contains not a syllable calculated to bring a blush to the most modest cheek. It is the history of a poor young girl, Angélique-Marie, a foundling, who is saved from perishing in a severe snow-storm by the Huberts, a worthy couple who are chasuble makers and embroiderers. She has a heritage of evil, but this is overcome by the Huberts, who bring her up as an embroiderer in the shadow of the old cathedral of Beaumont. There she reads "The Golden Legend," and forms a visionary idea of wedding a prince who shall come to her, dazzling in his wealth, youth and beauty. A rich lover does come in the shape of Félicien, a son of the Bishop of Beaumont, born before his father became a priest. Then the complications promptly begin and gradually increase until the climax is reached. "Le Rêve" has a delightful domestic element and is full of quaint and romantic episodes, in some of which the supernatural is drawn upon quite freely and in a way that adds vastly to the charm of the delicious and fascinating novel, while a religious flavor gives it additional attractiveness. Almost the entire action takes place in Beaumont. "Le Rêve" will be more extensively read than any of Zola's previous works, and will bring him an entirely new class of readers.—TRIBUNE.

"Zola's latest and most exquisite creation, 'Le Rêve,' says the Paris correspondent to the 'New York World,' which, with the purity of its subject and the refinement of its treatment is sure to pacify all Academicians, and to make the 'man of Médan' an 'immortal,' is in every hand in Paris, and is enjoying an enormous sale." A complete and unabridged translation of "Le Rêve" has been made from the French by George D. Cox, Esq., and is published by T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Philadelphia, at the unprecedented low price of Twenty-five Cents a copy, and is for sale everywhere.

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CHAPTER I.

ANGÉLIQUE-MARIE.

DURING the rough winter of 1860 the Oise froze, heavy snows covered the plains of Lower Picardy, and there came one storm, particularly, from the north-east, which almost buried Beaumont on Christmas Day. The snow, having begun to fall in the morning, redoubled towards evening and piled up during the whole night. In the upper town, into the Rue des Orfèvres, at the end of which is found as if mortised in

the north façade of the cathedral transept, it swept, driven by the wind, and beat against the Saint Agnes door, the ancient Twelfth Century style almost Gothic door, profusely ornamented with sculpture beneath the bareness of the cope. At dawn the next day it lay there nearly three feet deep.

The inhabitants of the street were yet sleeping, lazy after the previous day's festivity. Six o'clock struck. Amid the darkness, to which the slow and stubborn fall of the snowflakes gave a bluish tinge, there was but one living, dimly-defined shape, a little girl nine years old, who, having taken refuge under the arches of the door, had passed the night there shivering, sheltering herself as best she could. She was clad in a thin woollen garment, worn to tatters, her head wrapped in a rag of foulard and her bare feet in the big shoes of a man. Without doubt she had stranded there only after having wandered about the town for a long while, for she was ready to fall from fatigue. For her it was the end of the world, no longer anybody or anything, the final abandonment, gnawing hunger, killing cold; and, in her weakness, stifled by the heavy weight of her heart, she had ceased to struggle; she retained only the physical recoil, the instinct of changing place and shrinking against those old stones when a gale sent the snow whirling.

Hour after hour sped by. For a long while, between the double doors of the two twin doorways, she had stood with her back against the dividing wall, the pillar of which bears a statue of Saint Agnes, the martyr thirteen years of age, a little girl like herself, with the palm

branch and a lamb at her feet. In the panel above the lintel the whole legend of the virgin child, betrothed to Jesus, is depicted in bold relief with genuine faith: her hair which came down and clothed her when the governor, whose son she had refused, sent her nude to the evil places; the flames of the burning pile which, drawing aside from her limbs, burned the executioners as soon as they had lighted the wood; the miracles performed by her bones; Constance, the daughter of the emperor, cured of leprosy, and the miracles of one of her painted figures; the priest Paulin, tormented by the need of taking a wife, presenting, by the advice of the Pope, the ring set with an emerald to the image, which put out its finger and then withdrew it, keeping the ring which is still seen upon it, which delivered Paulin. At the top of the panel, in a glory, Agnes is finally received into Heaven, where her betrothed Jesus weds her, so tiny and so young, giving her the kiss of eternal joy.

But, when the wind swept through the street, the snow lashed the front of the structure and white sheets threatened to bar the threshold; then the child stood out of the way at the sides, against the virgins placed above the stylobate of the inner widening of the doorways. They are the companions of Agnes, the saints who serve as her escort: three on her right—Dorothee, fed in prison with miraculous bread; Barbe, who lived in a tower; Geneviève, whose virginity saved Paris; and three on her left—Agathe, with her breasts twisted and torn away; Christine, tortured by her father and who threw pieces of her flesh in his face; Cécile, who was loved by an angel. Above these more virgins yet, three

compact ranks of virgins ascend with the arcs of the doorway tops, adorn the three arches with a bloom of triumphant and chaste flesh, martyred here below, bruised by torments, on high received by a flight of cherubim, filled with ecstasy in the midst of the celestial court.

And for some time nothing had protected the child any longer when eight o'clock struck and the light increased. If she had not tramped down the snow it would have mounted to her shoulders. The ancient door, behind her, was tapestried with it, as if hung with ermine, as white as an altar, at the bottom of the gray façade, so bare and so smooth that not a flake clung to it. The tall saints of the inner widening of the doorway particularly were clad with it, from their white feet to their white locks, sparkling with purity. Further up, the scenes of the panel, the little saints of the arches stood out in bold relief, designed with a dash of brightness upon the sombre background; and so as far as the final ecstasy, the marriage of Agnes, which the archangels seemed to celebrate beneath a shower of white roses. Standing upon its pillar, with its white palm branch and its white lamb, the statue of the virgin child had a white purity, an immaculate snow body, in that motionless rigidity of the cold, which froze about it the mystic rapture of victorious virginity. And, at its feet, the other, the miserable child, white with snow also, stiff and white to that extent that she seemed turned to stone, was no longer distinguishable from the tall virgins.

Meanwhile, along the silent house fronts, a window shutter which was thrown open with a bang made her

lift her eyes. It was to her right, in the second-story of the house adjoining the cathedral. A very handsome woman, a dark brunette, of about forty years, having the correct serenity of a marble image, had leaned out; and, despite the terrible cold, she for a minute left her bare arm outside, having seen the child stir. A look of pitiful astonishment saddened her calm visage. Then, with a shiver she shut the window again. She bore away with her the fleet vision, beneath the rag of foulard, of a small blonde girl, with violet hued eyes, her face elongated, her neck especially very long, of the elegance of a lily, upon sloping shoulders; but blue with cold, her little hands and her little feet half-dead, no longer having anything living about her but the light vapor of her breath.

The child had mechanically kept her eyes in the air, looking at the house, a very old two-story house, built towards the close of the Fifteenth Century. It was sealed into the very side of the cathedral, between two supporting walls, like a wart which had grown between the two toes of a colossus. And, supported thus, it was admirably preserved, with its base of stone, its upper story in sections of wood, garnished with visible bricks, its roof the framework of which projected a mètre beyond the gable-end, and its salient stairway turret in the left-hand corner, the narrow window of which yet contained the lead sheathing of the time. Age, however, had necessitated repairs, and the covering of tiles dated from Louis XIV.; one easily recognized the work done about that epoch: a dormer window pierced in the pinnacle of the turret, little wooden frames everywhere

replacing those of the primitive panes, and the three window openings made in the second-story, reduced to two, that of the middle stopped up with bricks, which gave the front the uniformity of the other and more recent buildings of the street. On the ground floor the modifications were also plainly visible: a door of moulded oak in place of the old iron door beneath the stairway, and the grand central archway, of which the bottom, the sides and the point had been walled up so as to have but one rectangular opening, a sort of broad window, instead of the ogive window which in the past looked out upon the sidewalk.

Devoid of thought, the child was still gazing at this neatly kept master artisan's venerable dwelling, and was reading a yellow sign nailed to the left of the door, bearing these words: "Hubert, Chasublier," in old black letters, when again the noise of a shutter flung back attracted her attention. This time it was the shutter of the square window on the ground floor. A man in his turn leaned out, with an uneasy visage, a nose like an eagle's beak and a knobby forehead, crowned with thick hair already white, although he was scarcely forty-five; and he also devoted a minute to examining her, with a wrinkle of pain about his big, tender mouth. Afterwards she saw him standing behind the little, greenish panes. He turned, made a gesture and his handsome wife reappeared. Both of them remained motionless side by side and, with a profoundly sad air, kept their eyes fixed upon her.

For four hundred years the line of the Huberts, embroiderers from father to son, had dwelt in that

house. A master chasuble maker had built it under Louis XI., another had repaired it under Louis XIV., and the present Hubert embroidered chasubles there like all the rest of his race. At twenty he had loved a young girl of sixteen, Hubertine, with such a passion that, on the refusal of her mother, the widow of a magistrate, he had abducted and then married her. She was marvelously beautiful ; this was all their romance, their joy and their misfortune. When, eight months later, being in a delicate situation, she came to the death-bed of her mother, the latter disinherited and cursed her, so the infant, which was born the same evening, died. And since, in her coffin in the cemetery, the obstinate woman had not yet pardoned, for the couple had had no other child despite their ardent desire. After twenty-four years they still wept for the one they had lost ; they now despaired of ever softening the dead mother.

Troubled by their glances, the little girl had again crept back of the pillar of Saint Agnes. She was also disturbed by the awakening of the street : shops had opened and people had begun to come out. This Rue des Orfèvres, the extremity of which runs up against the lateral façade of the church, would be a perfect blind alley, stopped on the side of the arch by the house of the Huberts, if the Rue Soleil, a narrow lane, did not free it from the other side by running along the collateral as far as the main façade on the Place du Cloître ; and two devotees passed who glanced in surprise at the little beggar who was a stranger to them in Beaumont. The slow and persistent fall of the snow continued and the cold seemed to increase with the wan light ; only a dis-

tant noise of voices was heard, deadened by the thickness of the huge white winding-sheet which covered the town.

Maddened, and ashamed of her abandonment as of a fault, the child was drawing still further back when, suddenly, she saw Hubertine, who, having no servant, had come out for bread, standing in front of her.

"Little one, what are you doing there? Who are you?"

She did not answer, but hid her face. Her limbs no longer had feeling in them; she was about to faint, as if her heart was being frozen and ceasing to beat. When the good woman had turned her back, with a gesture of discreet pity, she sank upon her knees in exhaustion and fell like a rag into the snow, the flakes silently commencing to bury her. As Hubertine was returning with her warm bread, she saw her lying on the ground and again approached her.

"See here, little one, you can't stay where you are."

Then Hubert, who had also come out and was standing at the door of the house, relieved her of the bread, saying:

"Take her up and carry her in."

Hubertine, without a word, stooped and took her in her strong arms. The child did not shrink from her and was borne away like an inanimate thing, her teeth clenched, her eyes closed, as cold as ice and as light as a little bird fallen from its nest.

They went into the house and Hubert closed the door, while Hubertine, her burden in her arms, crossed the room on the street, which served as a parlor and in which

several pieces of embroidery were displayed at the big square window. Then she passed into the kitchen, the ancient common room, preserved almost intact, with its visible beams, its floor mended in twenty places and its vast chimney with a stone mantelpiece. The utensils on the shelves, pots, kettles and pans, of old faïence, stone-ware and pewter, dated back one or two centuries. But a modern stove, a large cast-iron cooking stove, the copper equipment of which shone, occupied the hearth. It was red hot and water could be heard boiling in a pot. A pan, full of coffee and milk, was keeping warm on one of the holes.

"Fichtre! it's more comfortable here than outside!" said Hubert, putting the bread on a substantial Louis XIII. table which occupied the centre of the room. "Put that poor little thing beside the stove that she may thaw."

Hubertine seated the child and both of them watched her recover consciousness. The snow on her garments melted and fell in heavy drops. Through all the rents of the big masculine shoes her bruised little feet could be seen, while the thin woolen dress showed the rigidity of her limbs, her pitiful body marked by want and suffering. She gave a long shiver and opened her eyes wildly, with the start of an animal which awakes to find itself caught in a trap. She thrust her face into the rag tied under her chin. They thought her right arm disabled, so motionless did she hold it against her breast.

"Reassure yourself; we don't want to do you any harm. Where are you from? Who are you?"

As they talked to her she grew more frightened,

turning her head as if some one stood behind her ready to beat her. She glanced furtively around the kitchen, examining the floor, the beams and the shining utensils; then her glance strayed outside through the two irregular windows left in the ancient opening, searched the garden as far as the trees of the bishop's house, the white forms of which overtopped the wall at the back, and she seemed astonished to find the cathedral there, with the Twelfth Century windows of the chapels of its arch, to the left, along an alley. And again she gave a great shiver, under the influence of the heat of the stove, which had begun to penetrate her; then she brought back her eyes to the floor and did not stir again.

"Do you belong in Beaumont? Who is your father?"

As she remained silent, Hubert thought that she was, perhaps, too hungry to reply.

"Instead of questioning her," said he, "we would do better to give her a cup of good warm coffee and milk."

This was so reasonable that at once Hubertine gave her her own cup. While she was cutting her two large slices of bread the child was suspicious and still drew away from her; but the torture of hunger proved too strong for her and she ate and drank greedily. That they might not trouble her the husband and wife remained silent, greatly affected to see her little hand tremble so that she could scarcely get it to her mouth. And she used her left hand only, her right arm remaining persistently glued to her body. When she had finished she nearly broke the cup, which she awkwardly caught.

"Is your arm hurt?" asked Hubertine. "Show it to us, my dear; don't be afraid!"

But, as she touched it, the child sprang up and violently defended herself; in the struggle she moved the arm and a small pasteboard covered book, which she had hidden against her very skin, slipped through a tear in her dress. She strove to recover it and stood with both her fists clenched angrily on seeing that these unknown people had opened and were reading it.

It was a pupil's book, delivered by the "Administration des Enfants Assistés" of the Department of the Seine. On the first page, beneath a medallion of Saint Vincent de Paul, the forms were printed: Name of the Pupil, and a simple stroke of ink filled the blank; then, in the space for first names, those of Angélique-Marie; and in the lines for dates, "Born January 22, 1851, admitted the 23d of the same month, under the registered number 1634." Hence her father and mother were unknown; she had no paper, not even a birth certificate, nothing but this little book of an administrative coldness, with its pale pink pasteboard cover. She was nobody and had an asylum book, abandonment numbered and classified.

"Oh! a foundling!" cried Hubertine.

Then Angélique spoke in a mad burst of rage.

"I am worth more than all the others! Yes! I am better, better, better! I never stole anything from the others and they all robbed me! Give me back what you have stolen from me!"

Such impotent pride, such a passion to be the strongest shook her little woman's body that the Huberts were amazed. They no longer recognized the blonde child, with violet-hued eyes and long neck, with the grace of a

lily. The eyes had turned black in the wicked face and the sensual neck was swollen with a rush of blood. Now that she was warm she raised herself up and hissed like an adder picked up from the snow.

"So you are bad, eh?" said the embroiderer, gently. "It's for your good, if we want to know who you are."

And over his wife's shoulder he ran through the book, the leaves of which she was turning. On the second page was the name of the nurse. "The infant Angélique-Marie was entrusted January 25, 1851, to the nurse Françoise, wife of Sieur Hamelin, by profession a farmer, dwelling in the Commune of Soulanges, Arrondissement of Nevers; which nurse received at the moment of departure pay for the first month's nourishment, besides an outfit." A certificate of baptism followed, signed by the almoner of the "Hospice des Enfants Assistés"; then came doctors' certificates on the departure and arrival of the child. The payments for the months, every quarter, filled further along the columns of four pages, attached to which each time was the illegible signature of the percepteur.

"What, Nevers!" demanded Hubertine, "it was near Nevers that you were raised?"

Angélique, red at not being able to prevent them from reading, had fallen back into her fierce silence. But anger unlocked her lips and she spoke of her nurse.

"Ah! very sure Mamma Nini would have beaten you! She defended me, though she gave me slaps sometimes herself. Ah! very sure I wasn't so unhappy down there with the animals."

Her voice was choked; she continued to talk in

broken, incoherent phrases of the meadows to which she had driven La Rousse, of the great highway on which they played, of the cakes they cooked, and of a big dog which had bitten her.

Hubert interrupted her, reading aloud :

“In case of grave sickness or bad treatment, the under-inspector is authorized to change the children’s nurses.”

Underneath this was written that the infant Angélique-Marie had been entrusted June 20, 1860, to Thérèse, wife of Louis Franchomme, both florists, residing in Paris.

“Good ! I understand,” said Hubertine. “You have been sick and they brought you back to Paris.”

But it was not that, and the Huberts only learned the whole story by drawing it bit by bit from Angélique. Louis Franchomme, who was the cousin of Mamma Nini, had been forced to return to his village for a month in order to recover from a fever, and it was then that his wife, Thérèse, conceiving a great affection for the child, had obtained permission to take her to Paris, where she engaged to teach her how to become a florist. Three months later her husband died and, very ill herself, she was obliged to return to the home of her brother, the tanner Rabier, established at Beaumont. There she died in the early part of December, entrusting to her sister-in law the little girl, who, since that time, insulted and beaten, had suffered martyrdom.

“The Rabiers,” murmured Hubert, “the Rabiers ! Yes, yes, tanners on the bank of the Ligneul in the lower town. The husband drinks and the wife leads a bad life.”

"They treated me like a child of the street," pursued Angélique, disgusted, enraged with suffering pride. "They said that the gutter was good enough for me! When she had beaten me, the woman threw scraps on the ground for me, as she did for her cat, and often I went to bed without eating anything at all. Ah! I should have killed myself at last!"

She had a look of furious despair.

"Christmas morning—yesterday—they drank and fell upon me, threatening to dig my eyes out with their thumbs for amusement. Then, as that did not succeed, they fought each other so terribly that they fell down in the chamber and I thought they both were dead. For a long while I had resolved to escape. But I wanted my book. Mamma Nini had sometimes shown it to me, saying: 'You see, that's all you possess, for, if you had not that, you would have nothing.' And I knew where they hid it, since the death of Mamma Thérèse, in the top drawer of the bureau. Then, I sprang over them, got my book and ran, pressing it under my arm against my skin. It was too big; I imagined that everybody saw it and was going to steal it from me! Oh! I ran, I ran! and when it got dark night I was cold in that doorway—oh! I was so cold that I thought I was dead! But that's nothing; I did not let go of the book and there it is!"

And, with a sudden spring, as the Huberts had closed it to return it to her, she snatched it from them. Then, sitting down, she threw herself on the table, holding it in her hands and sobbing, her cheek against the pale pink cover. A frightful attack of humility had broken

down her pride, her entire being seemed to have melted in the bitterness of those few pages with worn edges, of that poor thing which was her treasure, the sole bond which attached her to the life of the world. She could not empty her heart of such great despair; her tears flowed, flowed ceaselessly; and, beneath this prostration, she had recovered her pretty blonde, childish face, purity itself, of a somewhat elongated oval, her violet eyes paled by tenderness and the delicate bend of her neck, which made her resemble a little virgin of a stained glass window. Suddenly she seized Hubertine's hand; she glued her lips, greedy for caresses, to it and kissed it passionately.

The Huberts were greatly affected by this; they muttered, ready to weep themselves.

"Dear, dear child!"

So she was not altogether bad! Perhaps they could cure her of that violence which had frightened them.

"Oh! I beg you not to take me back to them!" sobbed she. "Don't take me back!"

The husband and wife glanced at each other. It so happened that since autumn they had been thinking of taking a resident apprentice, some little girl who would brighten up the house, so saddened by their regret at not having children. And the matter was decided on the instant.

"Shall we take her?" asked Hubert.

Hubertine replied without haste, in her calm voice:

"Yes!"

Immediately they saw to the formalities. The embroiderer related the matter to the Judge of the Peace

of the North Canton of Beaumont, M. Grandsire, who was a cousin of his wife, the only relative she had ; and the latter took everything upon himself, wrote to the "Assistance Publique," where Angélique was easily recognized, thanks to the registered number, and obtained permission for her to remain as apprentice with the Huberts, whose honesty was well-known. The under-inspector of the arrondissement, when he came to regulate the book, made the contract with the new employer, by which the latter was to treat the child kindly, keep her clean, send her to school and the parish church and furnish her with a bed in which she could sleep alone. On its side, the Administration engaged to pay him the indemnities and deliver him the clothing, according to the rule.

In ten days all was arranged. Angélique slept upstairs in the garret chamber, which looked out upon the garden ; and she had already taken her first lessons in embroidery. On Sunday morning, prior to taking her to mass, Hubertine opened before her the old trunk in the workroom, in which she locked up the fine gold. She held the book in her hand ; she placed it in the bottom of a drawer, saying :

"Look where it is put. I don't want to hide it, so that you can get it if you wish. That's better than for you to steal it ! Remember where it is !"

That morning, on entering the church, Angélique again found herself beneath the Saint Agnes doorway. There had been a slight thaw during the week ; then the cold had set in once more, so severe that the half-melted snow on the sculptures had frozen in a host of bunches and

needles. It was now one sheet of ice—transparent robes, with crystal lace, which clad the virgins. Dorothée held a torch, the limpid flow of which was falling from her hands; Cécile wore a silver crown from which trickled sparkling pearls; and Agathe, over her breast torn by the pincers, was sheathed in crystal armor. The scenes of the panel and the little virgins of the arches seemed to have been as they were for centuries—behind the glass and gems of a gigantic shrine. Agnes had a trailing court-mantle, sewed with light and embroidered with stars. Her lamb had a fleece of diamonds and her palm branch had acquired the hue of the sky. The whole door shone in the purity of the biting cold.

Angélique called to mind the night she had passed there under the protection of the virgins. She raised her head and smiled upon them.

CHAPTER II.

THE GOLDEN LEGEND.

BEAUMONT is composed of two towns completely separate and distinct: Beaumont-l'Église, upon the height, with its old cathedral of the Twelfth Century, its bishop's house which dates only from the Seventeenth, and its population of scarcely a thousand souls, packed, stifled in the depths of its narrow streets; and Beaumont-la-ville, at the foot of the height, upon the border of the Ligneul, a former faubourg which the prosperity of its lace and batiste factories has enriched and enlarged until it counts nearly ten thousand inhabitants and has spacious squares and a pretty sous-préfecture of modern taste. The two cantons, the north canton and the south canton, have thus not much more between them than administrative relations. Although but thirty leagues from Paris, whither one can go in two hours, Beaumont-l'Église still seems walled in its ancient ramparts, of which, however, but three gates remain. A stationary, special population leads there the same existence which their ancestors led from father to son for five hundred years.

The cathedral explains everything; it has given birth to and preserved all. It is the mother, the queen, enormous amid the little heap of low houses, like a chilly covey sheltered beneath its wings of stone. The people live there only for it and by it; the factories work and

the shops sell but to feed it, clothe it and keep it—it and its clergy; and if one meets there some of the bourgeois, they are the last devotees of the vanished crowds. It beats in the centre, each street is one of its veins and the town has no other breath than its breath. Hence that soul of another age, that religious numbness in the past, that cloistered town which surrounds it, still odorous with an old perfume of peace and faith.

And, of all the mystic town, the Huberts' dwelling, where for the future Angélique was to live, was the closest to the cathedral, of its very flesh. The authorization to build there, between two counter-forts, must have been accorded by some curé of the past, desirous of attaching the ancestor of that line of embroiderers as master chasublier, furnisher of the sacristy. On the southern side the colossal mass of the church barred the narrow garden: first, the circumference of the lateral chapels, the windows of which opened upon the flower-beds; then, the projected body of the nave which was supported by pillars; and, then, the vast roof covered with sheets of lead. Never did the sun penetrate to the depths of this garden; ivy and box alone grew vigorously there; and the eternal shade was, nevertheless, very agreeable there, fallen from the gigantic ridge of the arch, a religious shade, sepulchral and pure, which felt good. In the greenish half-light, of a calm coolness, the two towers let fall only the sound of their bells. But the entire house preserved the quiver of it, sealed to those old stones, melted into them and living on their blood. It trembled at the slightest ceremonies; the grand masses, the roar of the organs, the voices of the

choristers and even the oppressed sighs of the faithful buzzed in each one of its rooms, soothed it with a holy breath, come from the invisible ; and through the warm wall sometimes vapors of incense seemed to smoke.

Angélique, for five years, grew up there, as in a cloister, far from the world. She went out only on Sunday, to go to hear the seven o'clock mass, Hubertine having obtained permission not to send her to the school, where she feared evil company. That antique and cramped dwelling, with its garden of a dead peace, was her universe. She occupied a white-washed chamber up under the roof ; she came down-stairs in the morning to breakfast in the kitchen ; she went to the work-room in the second-story to work ; and these were, with the stone stairway turning in its tower, the only nooks in which she lived, the venerable nooks, preserved from age to age, for she never entered the chamber of the Huberts, and scarcely did more than pass through the lower salon, the two rooms rejuvenated in the style of the period. In the salon, the joists had been plastered ; a cornice adorned with little palms and accompanied by a central rose ornamented the ceiling ; the paper, covered with big yellow flowers, dated from the First Empire, as also did the mantelpiece of white marble and the mahogany furniture—a table, a sofa and four arm-chairs upholstered in Utrecht velvet. On the rare occasions when she went there to renew the display of goods, a few strips of embroidery hung in front of the window, if she cast a glance without, she saw the same eternal view, the street running up against the Saint-Agnes door : a devotee pushed open the leaf of the door, which

closed again noiselessly ; the shops of the goldsmith and wax-chandler opposite, with their rows of holy pyxes and their huge wax candles, always seemed empty. And the monastic peace of all Beaumont-l'Église, of the Rue Magloire behind the bishop's house, of the Grand 'Rue where the Rue des Orfèvres came out, and of the Place du Cloître where stood the two towers, was felt in the drowsy air and fell slowly with the pale light on the deserted pavement.

Hubertine had charged herself with completing Angélique's education. She held to the old opinion that a woman knows enough when she can spell and is acquainted with the four rules. But she had to struggle against the child's great disinclination, as Angélique persisted in looking out of the windows, though the recreation was but slight for they opened upon the garden. Angélique did not care for much except reading ; despite the dictations, taken from a choice classic, she never succeeded in spelling a page correctly ; and she had, nevertheless, a pretty handwriting, slanting and firm, one of those irregular hands of the great ladies of the past. For the rest, geography, history and arithmetic, her ignorance was complete. Of what good was science ? It was altogether useless. Later, at the time of the first communion, she learned her catechism word for word with such an ardor of faith that she astonished everybody by the reliability of her memory.

The first year, in spite of their gentleness, the Huberts had often despaired. Angélique, who gave promise of becoming a very expert embroiderer, disconcerted them by sudden fits of inexplicable idleness, after days of ex-

emplary application. She all at once grew lazy, gluttonish, stealing the sugar, her eyes having a black and blue look in her red face; and if she was scolded, she burst out with wicked responses. On certain days, when they strove to conquer her, she reached veritable crises of proud madness, stiffened, kicking and striking, ready to tear and to bite. Then fear made them recoil before this little monster; they were terrified by the devil which was raging within her. Who was she? Whence came she? These foundlings almost always spring from vice and crime. Twice they had resolved to get rid of her, to send her back to the Administration grieved, regretting having taken her. But, each time, these frightful scenes, which left the house in a ferment, ended with the same deluge of tears, the same wild repentance, which threw the child upon the floor with such a desire for punishment that they were forced to forgive her.

Little by little Hubertine obtained authority over her. She was exactly fitted for this education, with the good nature of her soul, her strong and gentle air and her upright mind of a perfect equilibrium. She taught her duty and obedience, which she opposed to passion and pride. To obey was to live. It was necessary to obey God, parents and superiors, a whole hierarchy of respect, in default of which existence was unhinged and spoiled. Hence, at each revolt, to teach her humility, she imposed upon her as a penance some rough work, such as wiping the pots and kettles or scrubbing up the kitchen; and she remained there until the end, keeping her bent over the floor, enraged at first but conquered at

last. She was also disturbed by the child's love, by the suddenness and violence of her caresses. Many times she had surprised her kissing her hands. She saw her get into a fever for images, little engravings of holiness, pictures of Jesus which she had collected; then, one evening, she found her in a swoon, with tear-stained face, her lips glued to the images. There was another terrible scene when she confiscated them, cries, tears, as if her skin were being torn from her; from that time, she held her sternly in check, no longer tolerating these out-bursts, overwhelming her with work, making it silent and cold around her as soon as she noticed that the child was becoming excited, with wild eyes and burning cheeks.

Besides, Hubertine had discovered an aid in the book of the Assistance Publique. Each quarter, when the percepteur signed it, Angélique remained gloomy until evening. A pain shot through her heart, if, by chance, on taking a bobbin of gold thread from the trunk, she perceived it. And, one day of furious wickedness, when nothing had been able to conquer her and she had upset everything in the bottom of the drawer, she had suddenly been quelled by the sight of the little book. Choking with sobs, she had cast herself at the feet of the Huberts, humbling herself, murmuring that they had done very wrong to take her in and that she did not deserve to eat their bread. Since that day, the thought of the book had often restrained her in her fits of rage.

It was thus that Angélique attained her twelfth year, the age of the first communion. The calm surroundings, that small house slumbering in the shadow of the cathedral, balmy with incense and quivering with canticles,

avored the gradual amelioration of this savage shoot, torn from one knew not where and replanted in the mystic soil of the narrow garden; and there were also the regular life led, the daily toil and the ignorance of the world, without even an echo penetrating there from the somnolent quarter. But the mildness, above all, came from the great love of the Huberts, which seemed as if enlarged by an incurable remorse. The husband passed his days in striving to efface from his wife's memory the wrong he had done her in marrying her against her mother's will. He had clearly seen, at the death of their infant, that she accused him of that punishment, and he had striven to obtain pardon. He had long since obtained it; she adored him. He doubted it sometimes and that doubt made his life desolate. To be certain that the dead woman, the obstinate mother, had allowed herself to be touched beneath the ground, he still wished to have a child. Their sole desire was this child of pardon; Hubert lived at the feet of his wife in worship, one of those conjugal passions as ardent and chaste as a constant betrothal. If, before the apprentice, he did not even kiss her, he did not enter their chamber, after twenty years of housekeeping, without experiencing the reverence of a young husband for his bride. That chamber was discreet, with its white and gray paint, its paper with blue bouquets and its walnut furniture upholstered in cretonne. Never did a sound emerge from it, but it was redolent of devotion, it warmed the entire house. And it was for Angélique a bath of affection, in which she grew up very passionate and very pure.

A book completed the work. As she was rummaging one morning, searching upon a shelf in the workroom, covered with dust, she discovered, among some worn-out embroidery implements, a very old copy of Jacques de Voragine's "Golden Legend." This French translation, dated 1549, must have been bought in the past by some master chasublier for the engravings, which were full of useful information concerning the saints. For a long while she herself was not much interested save by these pictures, these ancient wood-cuts of an unquestioning faith, which delighted her. As soon as she was allowed to play, she took the quarto, bound in yellow calf, and slowly turned over the leaves: first, the false title, red and black, with the address of the publisher, "At Paris, in the Rue Neufve Nostre-Dame at the sign of Saint Jehan Baptiste;" then, the title, flanked by medallions of the four evangelists, enframed at the bottom by the adoration of the three wise men, and at the top by the triumph of Jesus Christ treading bones under foot. And afterwards the pictures succeeded each other, ornamented letters, large and medium-sized engravings in the text, relating to the matter on the pages: the Annunciation, an immense angel inundating with sunbeams an exceedingly slender Mary; the Massacre of the Innocents, the cruel Herod amid a heap of little corpses; the Manger, Jesus between the Virgin and Saint Joseph, who held a wax candle; Saint John, the Almoner, giving to the poor; Saint Mathias breaking an idol; Saint Nicholas, dressed in a bishop's robes, having on his right some babies in a tub; and all the female saints, Agnes, with her neck pierced by a sword; Christine, with her breasts

torn away by pincers; Geneviève, followed by her lambs; Julienne flagellated; Anastasie burned; Mary, the Egyptian, doing penance in the desert; Madeleine, bearing the vase of perfumes. Others, others still filed away, each with increasing terror and piety; it was like one of those terrible and fascinating stories which oppress the heart and moisten the eyes with tears.

But Angélique, little by little, grew curious to know just what the engravings represented. The two close columns of text, the impression of which had remained very black upon the yellowed paper, frightened her by the barbarous aspect of the Gothic characters. However, she became accustomed to them, deciphered the characters, understood the abbreviations and contractions, made out the turns and the old words and at last read straight along, as enchanted as if she had penetrated a mystery, triumphing at each new difficulty overcome. Beneath this toilsomely penetrated darkness a whole radiant world revealed itself. She entered into a celestial splendor. Her few classical books, so dry and so cold, no longer existed. The legend alone excited her, kept her bent down, her forehead between her hands, so absorbed that she ceased to live a real life, without consciousness of time, watching ascend, from the depths of the unknown, the grand outburst of the dream.

God is good, and first, there are the saints, male and female. They are born predestined, voices announce them and their mothers have striking dreams. All are beautiful, strong and victorious. Great lights environ them and their visages glow. Dominique has a star on his forehead. They read the minds of men and repeat

aloud what they think. They have the gift of prophecy and their predictions are always realized. Their number is infinite, there are among them bishops and monks, young girls and magadalens, beggars and lords of royal race, naked hermits eating roots, and old men with hinds in caverns. The history of all of them is the same: they grow for the Christ, believe in him, refuse to sacrifice to false gods, are tortured and die full of glory. The persecutions fatigue the emperors. André, nailed to the cross, preaches for two days to 20,000 persons. Conversions by wholesale ensue, 40,000 men are baptized simultaneously. When the crowds are not converted by the miracles, they flee in terror. The saints are accused of magic; enigmas are put to them which they solve; they are brought into contest with the doctors, who stand mute. As soon as they are taken into the temples to sacrifice, the idols are overturned by a breath and broken. A virgin ties her girdle about the neck of Venus, who falls to dust. The earth trembles, the temple of Diana falls, struck by lightning; and the people rebel, civil wars break out. Then, often, the executioners demand baptism, the kings kneel before ragged saints, who have espoused poverty. Sabine flees from the paternal mansion. Paule abandons her five children and deprives herself of baths. Mortifications and fasts purify them, neither wheat nor oil. Germain spreads ashes upon his food. Bernard no longer distinguishes the dishes, recognizes only the taste of pure water. Agathon keeps a stone in his mouth for three years. Augustin despairs for having sinned and amuses himself by watching a dog run. Prosperity and health are held in contempt, joy

commences with privations which kill the body. And it is thus that, triumphant, they live in gardens where the flowers are stars, where the leaves of the trees sing. They exterminate dragons, they raise tempests and calm them, they are snatched up in ecstasy two cubits from the soil. Widows provide for their needs during their lives and receive in dreams instructions to go bury them when they are dead. Extraordinary things happen to them, marvellous adventures as fascinating as romances. And, after hundreds of years, when their tombs are opened, sweet odors escape from them.

Then, opposite the saints, behold the devils, the innumerable devils. "They often saile arounde us like flyes and fille the aire without number. The aire is also fulle of deviles and evil spirites, as the raye of sunlighthe is fulle of atomes." And the battle is waged eternally. The saints are always victorious and they are always forced to recommence the victory. The more devils are driven off, the more return. Six thousand, six hundred and sixty-six were counted in the body of a single woman, whom Fortunat delivered. They squirm, they talk and shout with the voices of those possessed, whose sides they shake with a tempest. They enter into them by the nose, by the ears, by the mouth, and they come out with roars, after days of frightful struggles. At every turn of the highways a possessed person grovels and a passing saint gives battle. Basile, to save a young man, fights body to body. Macaire, sleeping among the tombs, is assailed and defends himself. The very angels, at death-beds, are reduced, in order to get the souls, to covering the demons with blows. At other

times the assaults are only on intelligence and mind. They joke, they play incessantly; the Apostle Peter, and Simon, the Magician, contended in miracles. Satan, who roams about, assumes every shape, disguises himself as a woman and even goes so far as to put on a resemblance to the saints. But, as soon as he is vanquished, he appears in his hideousness: "A blacke cat bigger than a dogge, the eyes enormous and fulle of fyre, the longe tongue reaching to the middle, broade and bloodye, the taylor twysted and lyfted hygh, exposing its rumpe, on the whych sytte horrible vermyn." He is the sole preoccupation, the great hatred. They are afraid of him and jeer him. They are not even honest with him. After all, despite the ferocious apparatus of his boiling kettles, he remains the eternal dupe. All the covenants he makes are torn from him by violence or trickery. Weak women overthrow him, Marguerite crushes his head with her foot and Julienne bursts open his sides with blows from a chain. A serenity comes from this, a contempt for evil since it is powerless, a certainty of good since virtue is sovereign. It suffices to sign one's self, the devil can do nothing, howls and vanishes. When a virgin makes the sign of the cross all hell crumbles.

Then, in this combat of the saints, male and female, against Satan, is unrolled the terrible torments of the persecutions. The executioners expose to flies the martyrs smeared with honey; make them walk with bare feet over broken glass and glowing coals; thrust them into ditches with reptiles; flagellate them with whips provided with leaden balls; nail them alive in coffins,

which they cast into the sea; hang them by the hair, then set them on fire; pour upon their wounds quicklime, boiling pitch and melted lead; seat them on white-hot bronze chairs; push down around their skulls red-hot helmets; burn their sides with torches, break their thighs upon anvils, tear out their eyes, cut off their tongues and crush their fingers one after the other. And the suffering does not count, the saints remain full of contempt, are in haste and eager to suffer more. But a continual miracle protects them, they fatigue the executioners. John drinks poison and is not incommoded by it. Sèbastien smiles, stuck full of arrows. At other times, the arrows remain suspended in the air, to the right and the left of the martyr; or, shot by the archer, they rebound and put out his eyes. The saints drink the melted lead as if it were ice-cold water. Lions cast themselves down and lick their hands, as do the lambs. The gridiron of Saint Laurent is of an agreeable coolness to him. He cries: "Wretch, you have roasted one part; turn the other and then eat, for it is roasted enough." Cécile, plunged into a boiling bath, "was there as if in a colde playce and did not feele a particle of sweate." Christian frustrates his tortures: her father causes her to be beaten by twelve men, who succumb from fatigue; another executioner succeeds him, fastens her upon a wheel, kindles a fire beneath it, and the flames spread, devour 1,500 persons; he casts her into the sea, with a stone about her neck, but the angels bear her up, Jesus comes in person to baptize her, then confides her to Saint Michael that he may take her back to land; another executioner finally shuts her up with vipers, which twine

about her throat with a caress; leaves her five days in an oven, where she sings, without suffering any harm. Vincent, who undergoes still more, does not suffer: they break his limbs; they tear his sides with iron combs until the entrails come out; they prick him with needles, they cast him upon a brazier which his wounds water with blood; they put him in prison with his feet nailed to a post; and, torn, roasted, his stomach open, he still lives; and his tortures are changed into the sweetness of flowers, a great light fills the dungeon and angels sing with him upon a bed of roses. "The sweete sound of synging and the softe odour of flowers spreade outside, and when the guardes had seene they were converted to the faithe, and when Dacien hearde this thyng, he was furious and sayde: 'What can we doe to him more, we are conquered.'" Such is the cry of the tormentors and this can end only in their conversion or their death. Their hands are stricken with paralysis. They perish violently, fish-bones choke them, thunderbolts crush them, their chariots break. And the dungeons of the saints are all resplendent. Mary and the apostles penetrate there with ease, through the walls. Continual succors and apparitions descend from the open heavens, where God shows Himself, holding a crown of jewels. Hence death is joyous, they defy it and parents rejoice when one of their children succumbs. Upon Mount Ararat 10,000 expire on the cross. Near Cologne the 11,000 virgins came themselves to be massacred by the Huns. In the circuses the bones crack beneath the teeth of beasts. At three years of age, Quirique, whom the Holy Spirit enables to talk like a

man, suffers martyrdom. Infants at the breast curse the executioners. A disdain, a disgust for the flesh, for the human rag, sharpens the pain with a celestial pleasure. Let them tear it, let them crush it, let them burn it, all that is good; again and again, never will it agonize enough; and they all call for the steel, the sword in the throat, which alone kills them. Eulalie, upon her funeral pile, breathes the flames to die more quickly. God grants her wish, a white dove emerges from her mouth and flies to heaven.

Angélique was wonder-smitten by these readings. So many abominations and that triumphal joy raised her in ecstasy above reality. But other and milder portions of the Legend amused her also; the beasts, for example, all the ark which was in action there. She was interested in the crows and eagles charged with feeding the hermits. Then, what pretty stories about the lions!—the useful lion, which digs the grave of Mary the Egyptian; the flaming lion, which guards the door of evil houses, when the Proconsuls cause the virgins to be conducted there; and again the lion of Jérôme, to which they entrusted an ass, which allows it to rob him and then brings it back. There was also the wolf, stricken with contrition, returning a stolen hog. Bernard excommunicates the flies, which fall dead. Remi and Blaise feed the birds at their table, bless them and restore their health. Francis, “full of very great dove-like simplicity,” preaches to them and exhorts them to love God. “A byrde which is called Cicada was in a figge tree, and Francis stretched out his hande and called that byrde, and instantly it obeyed and came upon his hande. And

he sayde to it: 'Syng, my sister, and prayse our Lorde.' And it sang straightwaye, and dyd not flye off until it was dismissed." For Angélique this was a continual subject of recreation, which gave her the idea of calling the swallows, curious to see if they would come. Besides, there were stories which she could not re-read without being sick, so much did she laugh. Christopher, the good giant, who carried Jesus, made her laugh until the tears came. She suffocated at the misadventure of the governor with the three housemaids of Anastasie, when he goes to find them in the kitchen and kisses the frying-pans and kettles, thinking he is kissing them. "He cayme out very blacke and very ugly and his garments destroyed. And, when the servants, who awaited hym outside, saw hym thus accoutred, they thought hym turned to a devill. Then they beate hym with rodde and fled and left hym all alone." But where the wildest laughter seized upon her was when they beat the devil, Julienne especially, who, tempted by him in her dungeon, administered to him such an extraordinary thrashing with her chain. "Then the Provost commanded that Julienne should bee brought out, and when she issued forth she dragged the devill after her, and hee cried, saying: 'My dame Julienne, doe mee no harme.' She dragged hym thus through all the market-playce, and afterwards cast hym into a very dirty ditche." Or, again, she repeated to the Huberts, as she embroidered, legends more interesting than fairy tales. She had read them so many times that she knew them by heart: the legend of the Seven Sleepers, who, fleeing from persecution, walled up in a cavern, slept there 377 years, and

whose awakening so greatly astonished the Emperor Theodosius; the legend of Saint Clement, endless adventures, unforeseen and touching, a whole family, the father, the mother and the three sons, separated by great misfortunes and finally reunited through the most beautiful miracles. Her tears flowed, she dreamed of it at night, she no longer lived save in this tragic and triumphant world of prodigy, in the supernatural land of all the virtues, recompensed by all the joys.

When Angélique went to her first communion, it seemed to her that she walked like the saints, at two cubits from the ground. She was a young Christian of the primitive church, she put herself in the hands of God, having learned in the book that she could not be saved without grace. The Huberts worshipped simply: the mass on Sunday, the communion at the great fêtes; and this with the tranquil faith of the humble, a little also by tradition and for their clientèle, the chasubliers having from father to son made their Easter devotions. Hubert interrupted himself sometimes while spreading an embroidery frame to hear the child read her legends, at which he trembled with her, his hair stirred by the light breath of the invisible. He was affected, he wept, when he saw her in her white robe. That day was like a dream, both of them returned from the church, amazed and weary. Hubertine found it necessary to scold both of them, she so reasonable, who condemned exaggeration even in good things. From that time she was compelled to combat the zeal of Angélique, especially the fury of charity with which she was seized. Francis took pov-

erty for his queen, Julien, the Almoner, called the poor his lords, Gervais and Protais washed their feet and Martin shared his mantle with them. And the child, after the example of Luce, wished to sell everything in order to give everything. She had at first despoiled herself of her trifling articles and afterwards she had commenced to pillage the house. But the trouble was that she gave to unworthy persons, without discernment, with open hands. One evening, two days after the first communion, on being reprimanded for having thrown some linen out of the window to a drunken woman, she fell back into her old violence and had a terrible fit. Then, crushed by shame, she was sick in bed for three days.

But the weeks and the months sped by. Two years had passed; Angélique was fourteen and was becoming a woman. When she read the Legend her ears buzzed, the blood beat in the little, blue veins of her temples; and now she felt a sister's tenderness for the virgins.

Purity is the sister of the angels, the possession of every good, the defeat of the devil and lordship of faith. It gives grace, it is perfection, which only has to present itself to conquer. The Holy Spirit renders Luce so heavy that a thousand men and five pairs of oxen, at the order of the Proconsul, cannot drag her to an evil place. A governor who wishes to kiss Anastasie is stricken blind. In the torments the purity of the virgins shines forth; their exceedingly white flesh, ploughed by the iron combs, lets streams of milk, instead of blood, gush from it. Ten times is repeated the story of the young Christian girl, fleeing from her family, hidden beneath

the robe of a monk, who is accused of having deceived a girl of the neighborhood, who bears the calumny without clearing herself, and then triumphs in the sudden revelation of her innocent sex. Eugénie is thus brought before a judge, recognizes her father, rends her robe and declares herself. The combat of chastity eternally recommences and the goads are constantly renewed. Hence the fear of woman is the wisdom of the saints. This world is sown with snares; the hermits seek the desert where no women are. They struggle frightfully, flagellate themselves, cast themselves naked among the briars and upon the snow. An eremite, to aid his mother in crossing a ford, covers his fingers with his mantle. A fastened martyr, tempted by a siren, bites off his tongue, which he spits in her face. Francis declares that he has no greater enemy than his body. Bernard shouts thief! thief! to defend himself against a lady, his hostess. A woman to whom Pope Léon gives the host kisses his hand; and he cuts off his wrist and the Virgin Mary restores the hand to its place. All glorify the separation of spouses. Alexis, very rich, on being married, instructs his wife in purity and then departs. People marry only to die. Justine, tormented with love at the sight of Cyprien, resists, converts him and walks with him to the torture. Cécile, beloved by an angel, reveals that secret, on the night of her nuptials, to Valérien, her husband, who consents not to kiss her and to receive baptism, that he may see the angel. "He founde Cécile in her chamber speaking with the angell, and the angell helde in his hande two crownes of roses, and gave them the one to Cécile and the other to

Valérien, and sayde: 'Keepe these crownes of sweate and of bodye without stayne.' " Twenty wed but to quit each other; death is stronger than love, it is a defiance to existence. Hilaire prays God to call her daughter Apia to Heaven that she may not marry; she dies, and the mother demands of the Father to summon her also, which is done. The Virgin Mary herself takes from women their betrothed lovers. A nobleman, related to the king of Hungary, renounces a young girl of marvellous beauty as soon as the Virgin Mary enters upon the struggle. "Suddenlie Our Ladye appeared to him, sayinge: 'If I am as beautifull as you saye, why do you quit me for another?'" And he betrothed himself to her.

Among all these female saints Angélique had her preferences, those whose lessons went to her heart, who touched her even to the point of correcting her. Thus the wise Catherine, born in the purple, enchanted her by the universal science of her eighteen years, when she disputes with the fifty rhetoricians and grammarians, whom the Emperor Maximus opposes to her. She confounds them, reduces them to silence. "Theye were abashed and knewe not what to saye, but alle were silente. And the Emperor blamed them that theye had allowed themselves to be so badly vanquished by a mayde." The fifty then declare to him their conversion. "And then, when the tyrante hearde that, he was seized upon by a greate furie and commanded that all of them should be burnt in the mydste of the citie." In her eyes Catherine was the invincible savant, as noble and brilliant in wisdom as in beauty, she whom she would have

wished to be, in order to convert men and cause herself to be fed in prison by a dove, before having her head cut off. But, above all, Elizabeth, the daughter of the king of Hungary, afforded her continual instruction. At every outbreak of her pride, when violence carried her away, she thought of that model of meekness and simplicity, pious at five years of age, refusing to play, lying upon the ground to give homage to God, later the obedient and mortified spouse of the Landgrave of Thuringe, showing to her husband a gay visage which tears flooded every night, finally a continent widow, driven from her States, happy to lead the life of a beggar. "Her vestments were so vile that she wore a graye cloake mended with clothe of another color. The sleeves of her gowne were torne and patched with another color." The king, her father, sends a count to search for her. "And when the counte sawe her in such clothes and spynning, he cryed out with grieve and wonder, and sayde: 'Never did daughter of kynge appear in such garments, nor was seene to spyn woole.'" She is perfect Christian humility which lives on black bread with the mendicants, dresses their sores without disgust, wears their rude garments, sleeps upon the hard ground and follows the processions barefooted. "She sometimes washed the pots and pans of the kitchen, and disguised and hid herselfe that the housemaydes might not turne her from it, and sayde: 'If I coulde have founde another life more wretched, I would have led it.'" So it happened that Angélique, stiff with rage in the past when she was forced to scrub up the kitchen, now sought menial tasks when she felt herself tormented by a need of domination. Finally,

more than Catherine, more than Elizabeth, more than all, a saint was dear to her—Agnes, the infant martyr. Her heart leaped on finding again in the Legend that virgin, clad with her locks, who had protected her beneath the doorway of the cathedral. What a flame of pure love! How she repulses the governor's son, who accosts her as she is leaving school! "Get from mee, shepherd of death, commencement of sin and nourishment of felonie." How she praises her lover! "I love hym whose mother is a Virgin and whose father knew no woman, at whose beauty the sunne and the moon marvell, by whose odor the dead revive." And, when Aspasiën commands them to put "a sworde through her throate," she ascends to paradise to wed "her white and rosie husbände." For several months past especially, at troubled hours, when the heated blood throbbed at her temples, Angélique had evoked, implored her; and, immediately, it seemed to her that she was cooled. She saw her continually about her, she was filled with despair at often doing and thinking things which she felt angered her. One evening when she was kissing her hands, as she still sometimes took pleasure in doing, she suddenly grew very red and turned in confusion, although she was alone, having realized that the saint had seen her. Agnes was the guardian of her body.

At fifteen Angélique was thus an adorable girl. Certainly, neither the cloistered and laborious life, nor the mild gloom of the cathedral, nor the Legend of the beautiful female saints had made of her an angel, a creature of absolute perfection. Fits of fury still broke out in her and faults declared themselves, by unforeseen

freaks, in corners of her soul which they had neglected to guard. But she then exhibited so much shame, she would so much have preferred to be perfect ! and she was so human, so alive, so ignorant and pure after all ! On returning from one of the long walks which the Huberts allowed themselves to take twice a year, the Monday of the Pentecost and the day of the Assumption, she had torn up an eglantine and then had amused herself by replanting it in the narrow garden. She trimmed and watered it ; it grew up straighter there and bore larger flowers of a fine odor ; she watched it with her habitual passion, hesitating to graft it, however, wishing to see if a miracle would not make it bear roses. She danced about it and repeated with a ravished air : “ It is I ! it is I ! ” And if they joked with her concerning her rose-bush of the highway, she laughed herself, a little pale, with tears on the edges of her eyelids. Her violet-hued eyes were yet soft, her mouth partly opened and disclosed the white little teeth in the elongated oval of her visage, which her flaxen locks, with the delicacy of light, crowned with a golden glory. She had grown tall, her neck and shoulders still haughtily graceful, her throat round and her waist supple ; and gay and healthy, she possessed a rare beauty of an infinite charm in which bloomed the innocent flesh and the chaste soul.

The affection of the Huberts for her grew greater daily. The idea of adopting her had occurred to both of them. But they said nothing about it for fear of awakening their eternal regret. Hence, the morning when, in their chamber, the husband announced his decision, the wife, who had sunk upon a chair, burst into

sobs. Did not adopting that child amount to renouncing ever having one of their own? Certainly, they could not count much on having one at their age; and she gave her consent, softened by the good thought of making her her daughter. Angélique, when they spoke to her about it, sprang upon their necks and choked with tears. It was an understood thing; she would always remain with them, in that house entirely full of her now, rejuvenated by her youth and gay with her laughter. But, at the very first step, an obstacle filled them with consternation. On being consulted, the Judge of the Peace, M. Grandsire, explained to them the radical impossibility of the adoption, the law exacting that the adopted should be of age. Then, as he saw their grief, he suggested to them the expedient of voluntary guardianship: any individual past the age of fifty can attach a minor of less than fifteen to him by a legal title by becoming his or her voluntary guardian. The ages came within the provision, they accepted, enchanted; and it was even agreed upon that they would afterwards confer adoption on their ward by will, as permitted by the Code. M. Grandsire charged himself with the demand of the husband and the authorization of the wife, and then put himself in communication with the Director of the Assistance Publique, the guardian of all the assisted children, whose consent it was necessary to obtain. An inquiry took place and at length the papers were deposited in Paris, with the designated Judge of the Peace. And they were only waiting for the *procès-verbal*, which constitutes the act of voluntary guardianship, when the Huberts were seized upon by a tardy scruple.

Before thus adopting Angélique, ought they not to make an effort to find her family? If the mother existed, where did they get the right of disposing of the daughter, without being absolutely certain of her abandonment? Then, at bottom, there was that unknown, that spoiled race, from which, perhaps, came the child who had disturbed them in the past and the uneasiness concerning whom returned to them at that hour. They tormented themselves so much about the matter that they could not sleep.

Suddenly Hubert made the journey to Paris. It was a catastrophe in his calm existence. He lied to Angélique: the guardianship, he said, necessitated his presence. He hoped to learn everything in twenty-four hours. But, in Paris, the days sped by, obstacles presented themselves at every step, and he spent a week there, referred by one person to another, scouring the streets, bewildered and almost weeping. At first he was very coldly received at the Assistance Publique. The rule of its Administration is that the children shall not be informed as to their origin until they reach their majority. Two mornings in succession they sent him away. He was obliged to persist, to give explanations in three bureaux and to grow hoarse in presenting himself as voluntary guardian before an under-chief, a tall, lean man saw fit to inform him of the absolute absence of precise documents. The Administration knew nothing; a midwife had deposited the infant Angélique-Marie without giving the mother's name. Discouraged, he was about to return to Beaumont, when an idea brought him back for the fourth

time to ask to examine the certificate of birth, which ought to bear the name of the midwife. This was another troublesome affair. At last, he obtained the name, Madame Foucart, and even learned that the woman lived in the Rue des Deux-Écus in 1850.

Then the journeys recommenced. Part of the Rue des Deux-Écus was demolished, and no shop-keeper of the neighboring streets remembered Madame Foucart. He consulted a directory: the name was not in it. With his eyes raised, looking out for the signs, he resigned himself to climbing to the apartments of the midwives; and this means proved successful, he had the luck to fall upon an old lady, who exclaimed: "What! do I know Madame Foucart!—a person of such great merit, who has suffered misfortune!" She dwelt in the Rue Censier, at the other extremity of Paris. He hastened there.

There, instructed by experience, he promised himself that he would act diplomatically. But Madame Foucart, an enormous woman, piled up on short legs, did not let him bring forward in good order the questions he had prepared in advance. As soon as he uttered the Christian names of the child and the date of deposit, she started off of her own accord and told the whole story in a flood of bitterness. Ah! the little one was living! Well, she could flatter herself with having a famous hussy for a mother! Yes, Madame Sidonie, as they called her since her widowhood, a woman of very good family, having a brother a minister, according to report, which had not prevented her from engaging in the most villainous transactions! And she explained how she

had become acquainted with her, when the beggar carried on, in the Rue Saint-Honoré, a trade in fruits and oil from Provence, on her arrival from Plassans, whence she and her husband had come to tempt fortune. Her husband dead and buried, she had had a daughter for whom immediately on her birth she had evinced a total lack of affection, for she was as dull as an invoice of goods, as cold as a protest and as indifferent and brutal as a bailiff's assistant. One can pardon a fault, but not ingratitude! When the store was used up, had not she, Madame Foucart, nourished her during her confinement, had she not devoted herself to her even to disembarassing her by taking the child to the asylum? And, for recompense, when she, in her turn, had fallen into trouble, she had not succeeded in getting from her the month's board, or even fifteen francs which she had lent her from day to day. At present Madame Sidonie occupied a small shop and three rooms on the ground-floor in the Rue Faubourg-Poissonnière, where, under the pretext of selling lace, she sold everything. Ah! yes, ah! yes, it was better not to know a mother of that kind!

An hour later, Hubert was prowling about Madame Sidonie's shop. There he caught a glimpse of a thin, wan woman without age and without sex, clad in a worn-out black dress, stained with all sorts of shady transactions. Never could the remembrance of her daughter, born by chance, have warmed her trader's heart. Discreetly, he posted himself and learned things which he did not repeat to any one, not even to his wife. Nevertheless, he hesitated again, he returned to pass

once more in front of the mysterious little shop. Ought he not to push open the door, make himself known and obtain a consent? It was for him as an honest man to judge if he had the right to cut the bond forever. Suddenly, he turned his back and was in Beaumont that evening.

Hubertine had just learned at M. Grandsire's that the *procès-verbal* for the voluntary guardianship was signed. And, when Angélique cast herself into Hubert's arms, he clearly saw from the supplicating questioning of her eyes that she had comprehended the real motive of his journey. Then, he simply said to her:

"My child, your mother is dead!"

Angélique, weeping, embraced them passionately. The matter was never mentioned again. She was their daughter.

CHAPTER III.

ANGÉLIQUE'S WISH.

THAT year, on the Monday of the Pentecost, the Huberts had taken Angélique to breakfast among the ruins of the Château d'Hauteceur, which dominate the Ligneul, two leagues below Beaumont; and, on the morrow, after all that day of open air, walking and laughing, when the old clock of the workroom struck eight, the young girl was still asleep.

Hubertine was forced to go up-stairs and knock at her door.

"Come, lazy one! We have already breakfasted."

Quickly Angélique dressed herself and came down to breakfast alone. Then, when she entered the workroom, where Hubert and his wife had just commenced their toil, she said:

"Ah! how I slept! And that chasuble which is promised for Sunday!"

The workroom, the windows of which opened on the garden, was a vast apartment preserved almost intact in its primitive condition. On the ceiling, the two principal beams and the three spaces between the visible joists had not even received a coat of whitewash, but were very much smoked and worm-eaten, affording glimpses of the intervening laths through the cracks of the plaster. One of the stone corbels which supported the beams bore a date, 1463, without doubt the date of

construction. The fireplace, also of stone, crumbled and disjoined, kept its simple elegance, with its slender upright posts, its corbels, its corniced frieze and its cap terminated by a coping; upon the frieze one could even yet distinguish, as if melted by age, a bit of rude sculpture, a Saint-Clair, the patron of embroiderers. But the fireplace was no longer used, they had made an open cupboard of it by placing shelves there, where designs were piled; and now the apartment was warmed by a stove, a big bell of cast iron, the pipe of which, after having run along the ceiling, was let into the cap of the fireplace. The doors, now shaky, dated from the time of Louis XIV. Bits of the ancient floor were reaching the last stage of decay among the more recent strips, placed one by one over each hole. The yellow paint had been on the walls nearly a hundred years, faded above, rubbed below and stained with saltpetre. Every year they spoke of repainting, without being able to decide upon it through dislike for change.

Hubertine, seated before the frame on which the chasuble was stretched, raised her head, saying:

"You know that, if we deliver it on Sunday, I have promised you a basket of pansies for your garden."

Gayly, Angélique exclaimed:

"That's true. Oh! I'm going to work! But where's my shield? The implements get lost when one stops working."

She slipped the old ivory shield on the second joint of her little finger, and seated herself on the other side of the frame opposite the window.

Since the middle of the last century, not a modification

had been made in the arrangement of the workroom. The fashions had changed, the art of the embroiderer had been transformed, but one found there yet, fastened to the wall, the chanlatte, the piece of wood on which the frame rests, while a movable trestle supports it at the other end. In the corners lay antique implements: a diligent, with its cog-wheels and rods on which to put the gold of the bobbins without touching it; a spinning-wheel worked by hand, a sort of pulley, twisting the threads hooked to the wall; tambours of all sizes, furnished with their taffeta and osier splints, serving to embroider with hooks. Upon a shelf was ranged an old collection of nipping-tools for the spangles; and one saw there also a relic, a copper tatignon, the large classic candlestick of the ancient embroiderers. In the rings of a rack, made by nailing up a strap, were hung punches, mallets, hammers, knives for cutting the vellum, menne-lourds, and ratchels of boxwood which serve to shape the threads as they are used. And there was, besides, at the foot of the linden table, on which they cut out, a huge reel, the two movable osier wheels of which stretch the skein. Rows of bobbins of bright silk, strung on a cord hung near the trunk. On the floor, a basket was full of empty bobbins. A pair of huge scissors lay on the straw seat of one of the chairs, while a ball of twine had just fallen upon the floor and unrolled.

“Ah! the fine weather, the fine weather!” resumed Angélique. “That’s what makes it a pleasure to live!”

And, before bending over and becoming absorbed in her work, she forgot herself for another instant in front of the open window, through which entered the radiant

May morning. A bit of sunlight glided from the roof of the cathedral and a fresh odor of lilacs mounted from the garden of the bishop's house. She smiled, dazzled, bathed with spring. Then, she said, with a start, as if she had fallen asleep again :

"Father, I have no gold to use."

Hubert, who was about finishing pricking on paper the outlines of the design of a cope, went to get a skein from the depths of the trunk, cut it and frayed the two ends by scratching the gold which covered the silk ; and he brought the skein enclosed in a bit of parchment

"Is that all ?"

"Yes, yes."

With a glance she had assured herself that nothing else was lacking : the rods loaded with different hued gold, red, green, blue ; the bobbins of silk of every shade ; the spangles, the twists, flat or curled, in the case, the crown of a hat serving as a box ; the long, fine needles, the steel pincers, the thimbles, the scissors and the cake of wax. All these things were on the frame itself, upon the stretched material, which was protected by strong gray paper.

She had threaded a needle with gold to sew. But at the first stitch it broke, and she was forced to fray it again by scratching off a little of the gold, which she threw into the bouriquet, the waste box, which was also upon the frame.

"At last !" said she, when her needle was started.

Profound silence reigned. Hubert had set about stretching a frame. He had placed the two cylinders upon the chanlatte and upon the trestle, exactly facing

each other, so as to have straight the crimson silk of the cope, which Hubertine had just sewed to the cylinders. And he introduced the laths into the mortises of the cylinders, where he fixed them with the aid of four small nails. Then, after having pulled to the right and the left, he finished the stretching by removing the nails. They heard him tap with the ends of his fingers upon the stuff which resounded like a drum.

Angélique had become a rare embroiderer, of an address and taste which astonished the Huberts. Besides what they had taught her, she brought her passion, which gave life to the flowers and faith to the symbols. Beneath her hands the silk and the gold grew animated, a mystic flight shot from the slightest ornaments; she gave herself wholly to her work, with her imagination constantly on the alert, her belief in the infinite world of the invisible. Certain of her embroideries had so stirred the diocese of Beaumont that a priest, who was an antiquarian, and another, an amateur of pictures, had come to see her and had gone into ecstasies over her Virgins, whom they compared to the genuine figures of the Primitives. They had the same sincerity, the same feeling of the beyond, as if environed by a minute perfection of details. She had the gift of design, a real miracle which, without a professor, with nothing but her studies by the evening lamp, permitted her often to correct her models, to diverge from them, acting according to her fancy, creating with the point of her needle. Hence the Huberts, who declared the science of design necessary to a good embroiderer, were thrown into the background by her, despite their long experience. And they had

modestly come to be no more than her assistants, to entrusting her with all the works of great importance, the groundwork of which they prepared for her.

From one end of the year to the other how many marvels, brilliant and holy, passed through her hands! She worked only in silk, satin, velvet and cloth of gold and silver. She embroidered chasubles, stoles, manipules, copes, dalmatics, mitres, banners and chalice and pyx veils. But, above all, chasubles came to her continually, with their five colors: white for the confessors and the virgins, red for the apostles and the martyrs, black for the dead and the days of fasting, violet for the innocents, green for all the fêtes; and gold also, of a frequent usage, which might replace the white, the red and the green. In the centre of the cross were always the same symbols, the initials of Jesus and Mary, the triangle surrounded with rays, the lamb, the pelican, the dove, a chalice, an ostensor, a heart bleeding beneath thorns; while on the upright and arms were ornaments or flowers, all the ornamentation of the old styles, all the flora of large flowers, anemones, tulips, peonies, pomegranates and hortensias. There passed no season that she did not reproduce the symbolical ears of wheat and grapes in silver upon the black or in gold upon the red. For the very rich chasubles she varied the pictures, heads of saints, a central frame, the Annunciation, the Manger, Calvary. Sometimes the broad bands of gold were embroidered upon the very ends, sometimes she drew back the silk or satin bands over gold brocade or velvet. And this bloom of celestial splendors sprang up, piece by piece, from her slender fingers.

At that moment, the chasuble upon which Angélique was working was a chasuble of white satin, the cross of which was composed of a sheaf of golden lilies, interlaced with bright roses, in shaded silk. In the centre, in a crown of small roses of dull gold, the initial of Mary shone in red and green gold, with a great wealth of ornaments.

For an hour past, while she had been finishing the leaves of the little golden roses, not a word had disturbed the silence. But the gold broke again and she rethreaded her needle under the frame, without looking, like an adroit workwoman. Then, as she had raised her head, she appeared to drink in one long breath the spring-time which was entering.

"Ah!" she murmured, "what fine weather it was yesterday! How nice the sun is!"

Hubertine, who was waxing her thread, gave her head a toss.

"For my part, I'm bruised to a jelly. I have no feeling in my arms. That's because I'm not sixteen like you and because we go out so little!"

Immediately, however, she resumed work. She was preparing the lilies by sewing bits of vellum on the places marked, to give relief.

"And, besides, those early suns give you the headache," added Hubert, who, his frame stretched, was getting ready to rub pumice stone over the silk to arrange the design of the band of the cope.

Angélique was sitting with dreamy eyes, lost in the ray which fell from a buttress of the church. And she said, gently:

“No, no, all that day spent in the open air refreshed and invigorated me.”

She had finished the little golden foliage and set to work at one of the large roses, keeping ready as many threaded needles as the shades of silk, embroidering with cleft and deep stitches in the very direction of the movement of the petals. And, despite the delicacy of this task, the remembrances of the preceding day, which she had just reviewed in the silence, now overflowed from her lips, escaped in such numbers that she no longer ceased talking. She spoke of the departure, the vast country, the breakfast amid the ruins of Hauteceœur, upon the floor of a little hall, the fallen walls of which dominated the Ligneul, flowing below among the willows, fifty mètres away. She was full of it, of those ruins, of those bones scattered beneath the briars, which attested the enormousness of the colossus which, when standing, commanded the two valleys. The donjon remained, sixty mètres high, uncovered and cleft, but solid in spite of all upon its foundations fifteen feet in thickness. Two towers had also resisted the destroying hand of time: the tower of Charlemagne and the tower of David, connected by a fortification curtain almost intact. In the interior, one found a portion of the buildings, the chapel, the hall of justice and some chambers; and all this seemed to have been built for giants, the steps of the stairways, the embrasures of the windows and the benches of the terraces, on an extravagant scale for the generations of to-day. It was a whole strong town, five hundred men of war could sustain a siege of thirty months there, without lacking

either munitions or provisions. For two centuries the eglantines had despoiled the bricks of the lower rooms, lilacs and cytises had bloomed among the rubbish of the fallen ceilings and a plane tree had grown up in the fireplace of the grand hall. But when, at sunset, the carcass of the donjon stretched its shadow over three leagues of cultivated fields and the entire château seemed to reconstruct itself, colossal in the evening mist, one again felt its ancient sovereignty, the rude strength which had made it the impregnable fortress at which even the kings of France had trembled.

"And I am sure," continued Angélique, "that it is inhabited by souls which return at night. All sorts of voices are heard, there are animals everywhere which look at you, and I distinctly saw, on turning round, when we had quitted it, tall white figures floating above the walls. Is it not so, mother, you who know the château's history?"

Hubertine smiled placidly.

"Oh! ghosts! I never saw any for my part."

But, in truth, she knew the history, which she had read in a book, and she was compelled to relate it anew, at the pressing questions of the young girl.

The land had belonged to the seat of Rheims since the time of Saint Remi, who had received it from Clovis. An archbishop, Séverin, in the first year of the Tenth Century, caused a fortress to be built at Haute-cœur to defend the district against the Normans, who came up the Oise, into which the Ligneul flows. In the following century, a successor of Séverin gave it as a fief to Norbert, a younger son of the House of Nor-

mandy, in consideration of an annual rental of sixty sous and on condition that the town of Beaumont and its church should remain free. It was thus that Norbert became the chief of the Marquises of Hauteceur, whose famous line from thence fills history. Hervé IV., twice excommunicated for his thefts of ecclesiastical property, a bandit of the public highways, who slaughtered with his own hands thirty bourgeois at one time, had his tower razed by Louis le Gros, against whom he had dared to make war. Raoul I., who went as a crusader with Philippe-Auguste, perished before Saint-Jean-d'Acre from a lance-thrust in the heart. But the most illustrious was Jean V., the Great, who, in 1225, rebuilt the fortress, raised in less than five years this redoubtable Château d'Hauteceur, in the shelter of which he dreamed for a moment of the throne of France; and, after having escaped from the massacres of twenty battles, he died in his bed, the brother-in-law of the king of Scotland. Then came Félicien III., who went barefooted to Jerusalem, Hervé VII., who claimed his right to the throne of Scotland, and others still, powerful and noble for centuries, up to Jean IX., who, under Mazarin, had the pain of witnessing the dismantling of the château. After a final siege, they blew up with mines the vaults of the towers and the donjon, they burned the buildings, where Charles VI. had come to amuse his folly and which, nearly two hundred years later, Henri IV. had inhabited eight days with Gabrielle d'Estrées. All these royal souvenirs now slept in the grass.

Angélique, without stopping her needle, listened passionately, as if the vision of these dead grandeurs had

arisen from her frame, in proportion as the rose was born there in the soft life of colors. Her ignorance of history enlarged the facts, drew them from the depths of a prodigious legend. She trembled at them with ravished faith, the château reconstructed itself, mounted even to the gates of Heaven, the Hauteceurs were the cousins of the Virgin.

“And,” demanded she, “our new bishop, Monseigneur d’Hauteceur, is then a descendant of that family?”

Hubertine answered that Monseigneur must belong to a younger branch, the elder branch having been for a long time extinct. It was even a singular change, for during centuries the Marquises of Hauteceur and the clergy of Beaumont had been at war with each other. About 1150 an abbé undertook the construction of the church with only the resources of his order; hence money was soon lacking, the edifice was but up to the height of the vaults of the lateral chapels, and they were forced to content themselves with covering the nave with a wooden roof. Eighty years elapsed, Jean V. had just rebuilt the château when he gave three hundred thousand livres, which, added to other sums, permitted the continuation of the church. They finished raising the nave. The two towers and the grand façade were not terminated till much later, about 1430, in the middle of the Fifteenth Century. To reward Jean V. for his bounty the clergy had accorded him the right of burial, for himself and his descendants, in a chapel of the arch, consecrated to Saint George, and which from that time was named the Hauteceur Chapel. But the good relations could not last long, the château put the

franchises of Beaumont in continual peril, incessantly hostilities broke out upon questions of tribute and precedence. One, especially, the right of toll which the seigneurs claimed to have over the navigation of the Ligneul, perpetuated the quarrels when the great prosperity of the lower town, with its manufactories of fine stuffs, declared itself. From that period the fortune of Beaumont increased, while that of Hauteceœur diminished until the moment when the church triumphed in the dismantling of the château. Louis XIV. made the church a cathedral, a bishop's house was built in the ancient enclosure of the monks; and chance had now decreed that a Hauteceœur should return as bishop to command that clergy, still existing, which had vanquished his ancestors after a struggle of four hundred years.

"But," said Angélique, "Monseigneur has been married. He has a big son of twenty years, has he not?"

Hubertine had taken up her scissors to trim one of the bits of vellum.

"Yes, the Abbé Cornille told me about that. Oh! it's a very sad story. Monseigneur was a captain at twenty-one under Charles X. At twenty-four, in 1830, he resigned, and it is asserted that until he reached the forties he led a dissipated life—journeys, adventures and duels. Then, one evening, at the house of some friends in the country, he met Paule, the daughter of the Count de Valençay, who was very rich, miraculously handsome and scarcely nineteen, twenty-two years younger than himself. He fell madly in love with her and she adored him; they were compelled to hasten the marriage. It

was at that time that he repurchased the ruins of Haute-cœur for a trifle, ten thousand francs, I believe, with the intention of repairing the château, where he dreamed of installing himself with his wife. For nine months they lived hidden in the depths of an old property in Anjou, refusing to see any one and finding the hours too short. Paule had a son and died."

Hubert, who was rubbing the design with a ponce filled with white, had raised his head, very pale.

"Ah! the unfortunate man!" murmured he.

"It is related that he nearly died of it," continued Hubertine. "Fifteen days later he took orders. That was twenty years ago and he is a bishop to-day. But it is added that for twenty years he has refused to see his son, that child which cost its mother her life. He placed him at the house of his uncle, an old abbé, not wishing even to receive tidings of him, striving to forget his existence. One day when a portrait of the child had been sent him, he thought he again beheld his dear dead wife, and they found him upon the floor, as stiff as if he had been felled by a blow from a hammer. But age and prayer must have quieted this great grief, for the good Curé Cornille told me yesterday that Monseigneur had at last summoned his son to him."

Angélique, having finished her rose, which was so fresh that the odor of it seemed to exhale from the satin, again gazed out of the sunny window, her eyes obscured by a reverie. She repeated in a low voice:

"Monseigneur's son."

Hubertine terminated her story.

"A young man as handsome as a god, it appears.

The father desired to make a priest of him, but the old abbé objected, the youth having no inclination whatever that way. And he has millions!—fifty, according to report! Yes, his mother left him five millions, which, invested in the purchase of property in Paris, should represent more than fifty now. In fine, he is as rich as a king!”

“Rich as a king, handsome as a god!” Angélique repeated, unconsciously, in her dreamy voice.

And with a mechanical hand she took from the frame a rod loaded with gold thread, to begin embroidering a large lily in guipure. After having pulled out the thread from the slit in the rod, she fastened the end with a stitch of silk on the very edge of the vellum, which made the thickness. Then, working, she spoke again, without finishing her thought, lost in the vagueness of her desire:

“Oh! what I would wish, what I would wish——”

Deep silence again ensued, troubled only by a faint chant which came from the church. Hubert was putting order into his design by touching up with a brush all the lines pricked by the ponçure; and the ornaments of the cope appeared thus in white upon the red silk. It was he who now spoke:

“Those ancient times were so magnificent! The seigneurs wore vestments all stiff with embroidery. At Lyons they sold the stuff as high as six hundred livres the ell. You ought to read the statutes and ordinances of the master embroiderers, in which it is set forth that the embroiderers of the king have the right to requisition by armed force the workwomen of the other masters.

And we had a coat-of-arms: azure, the fesse variegated with gold, accompanied by three fleurs de lys likewise, two at the top and one at the bottom. Ah! it was fine away back in the past!"

He ceased and tapped with his nail on the frame to shake the dust from it. Then, he resumed:

"At Beaumont, they yet relate a legend concerning the Hauteceurs, which my mother repeated to me when I was a child: A frightful plague was ravaging the town and half the inhabitants had already succumbed, when Jean V., he who rebuilt the fortress, perceived that God had sent him the power to fight the scourge. Then, he went barefooted to the houses of the sick, knelt and kissed them; and, as soon as his lips had touched them, saying: 'If God wishes, I wish,' the sick were cured. That is why those words have remained the motto of the Hauteceurs, all of whom, since that time, have possessed the power to cure the pest. Ah! what stately men!—a dynasty! Monseigneur calls himself Jean XII., and the Christian name of his son should also be followed by a cipher, like that of a prince."

He stopped. Each one of his words had rocked and prolonged Angélique's reverie. She resumed, in the same sing-song voice:

"Oh! what I would wish, what I would wish——"

Holding the rod, without touching the thread, she whipped the gold with silk, conducting it to the right and to the left, upon the vellum, alternately, and fixing it at each turn with a stitch of silk. The big golden lily gradually bloomed.

"Oh! what I would wish, what I would wish, would

be to wed a prince—a prince whom I had never before beheld, who should come some evening at dark to take me by the hand and lead me into a palace. And what I would wish would be that he should be very handsome and very rich, oh! the handsomest and the richest that the earth has ever produced. I would wish for horses that I should hear neigh beneath my windows, precious stones, the flood of which should gush over my knees, and a rain of gold, a deluge of gold which should fall from my two hands as soon as I opened them. And what I would wish further would be that my prince should love me to madness in order that on my side I might love him like a mad woman. We should be very young, very pure and very noble always, always!”

Hubert, abandoning his frame, had approached, smiling; while Hubertine, good-naturedly, menaced the young girl with her finger.

“Ah! vain creature, ah! greedy one, so you are incorrigible, are you? You’re off with your desire to be a queen. Well, that dream is less wicked than to steal the sugar and reply insolently. But, after all, the devil is at the bottom of it, passion and pride are speaking.”

Angélique gazed at her, gayly and frankly.

“Mother, mother, what are you saying? Is it a sin to love what is beautiful and rich? I love it because it is rich, because it is beautiful, because it is agreeable to my heart and soul. A beautiful thing gives brightness and helps to live, like the sun. You well know that I am not mercenary. Money—ah! you would see what I would do with money, if I had plenty of it! It would be showered over the town, it would flow to the houses

of the wretched—a genuine blessing—no more poverty! In the first place, I would enrich you and father, I would like to see you in dresses and garments of brocade, like a lady and a seigneur of the olden time!”

Hubertine gently shrugged her shoulders.

“Crazy girl! But, my child, you are poor, you will not have a sou when you get married. How can you dream of a prince? So, you would wed a rich man?”

“What! would I wed one?”

And she assumed an air of profound stupefaction.

“Ah! yes, I would wed one! Since he would have money, what would be the good of my having any? I would owe all to him, I would love him so much the more.”

This triumphant argument enchanted Hubert, whose brain was excited by Angélique’s flight. He gladly sailed with her upon the wing of a cloud, he cried:

“She is right.”

But his wife cast a dissatisfied glance at him. She grew stern.

“My child, you will see later, when you know life.”

“I know life already.”

“Where could you have acquired a knowledge of it? You are too young, you are ignorant of evil. But evil exists and is all-powerful.”

“Evil, evil.”

Angélique uttered the word slowly in order to penetrate its meaning. And in her pure eyes the same innocent astonishment was expressed. She knew all about evil, the Legend had shown it to her sufficiently. Was not evil the devil?—and had she not seen the devil

always springing up, but always vanquished? After each battle he was left on the ground, terribly beaten and in a pitiful condition.

“ Evil! ah! mother, if you only knew how I snap my fingers at it! One has but to conquer one’s self and one lives happily.”

Hubertine made a gesture of vexed uneasiness.

“ You will make me repent of having brought you up in this house, alone with us, away from everybody. Yes, I am afraid that we shall feel remorse some day for having left you to this extent ignorant of existence. What paradise are you dreaming about? How do you picture the world to yourself? ”

A hope had brightened the young girl’s face, while, bent over, she worked the rod with the same continuous movement.

“ So you believe me very foolish, mother? The world is full of good people. When one is honest and toils, one is always rewarded. Oh! I know there are also some wicked folks. But do they count? People do not associate with them and they are speedily punished. And besides, you see, from afar the world produces upon me the effect of a vast garden, yes, of an immense park, all full of flowers and sunlight! It is so good to live and life is so sweet that it cannot be bad.”

She grew animated, as if intoxicated by the brightness of the silks and gold she was handling with her supple fingers.

“ Happiness is very simple. We are happy, are we not? and why? Because we love each other. See! it’s no more difficult than that—it is necessary to love a great

deal and to be greatly beloved. So, you will see when he shall come for whom I am waiting. We shall recognize each other at once. I have never beheld him, but I know what he should be like. He will enter, he will say: 'I have come to take you.' And I will answer: 'I have been expecting you—take me.' He will take me, and it will be done forever. We shall go into a palace to sleep on a bed of gold, incrustated with diamonds. Oh! it's very simple!"

"You are crazy, be silent!" interrupted Hubertine severely.

And, observing that she was excited, ready to again mount to the dream:

"Be silent, you make me tremble. Unhappy girl, when we marry you to some poor devil, you will break your bones in falling back to earth. Happiness, for poor people like us, is only in humility and obedience."

Angélique continued to smile with tranquil obstinacy.

"I await him and he will come."

"But she is right!" exclaimed Hubert, roused also, carried away by his excitement. "Why do you scold her? She is handsome enough for a king to ask us for her. Everything happens."

Hubertine sadly raised to him her pretty eyes, full of wisdom.

"Don't encourage her in evil-doing. Better than any one you know what it costs to yield to one's heart."

He turned very pale and big tears appeared on the edges of his eyelids. Immediately she had regretted the lesson, she had arisen to take his hands. But he released himself, he repented in a stammering voice:

"No, no, I was wrong. You hear, Angélique, you must listen to your mother. We are a couple of fools—she alone is sensible. I was wrong, I was wrong."

Too much agitated to sit down, leaving the cope which he had stretched, he occupied himself with gluing a banner, finished and remaining upon the frame. After having taken the pot of Flander's glue from the trunk, he passed the brush over the wrong side of the material, which consolidated the embroidery. His lips still trembled slightly and he remained silent.

But, if Angélique obediently maintained silence also, she continued mentally, she mounted higher and higher into the beyond of desire; and everything in her bespoke this, her mouth partly opened by ecstasy, her eyes in which was reflected the blue infinity of her vision. She was now embroidering that poor girl's dream with her gold thread; it was from it that the great lilies, the roses and the initial of Mary were born, thread by thread, upon the white satin. The stalk of the lily, in chevroned stitch, shot up like a jet of light, while the long and slender leaves, made of spangles each one sewed on with a bit of purl, fell back like a rain of stars. In the centre Mary's initial was dazzling, of a relief of massive gold, worked with guipure and figuring, burning like a tabernacle glory in the mystic conflagration of its rays. And the soft satin roses lived, and the entire chasuble shone, all white, miraculously blooming with gold.

Then, after a long silence, Angélique raised her head, her cheeks warm with the blood which had mounted from her heart. She looked at Hubertine with a mischievous air, she tossed her chin and said again:

"I await him and he will come."

It was a foolish imagination. But she persisted. She was sure that was the way it would be. Nothing shook her agreeable conviction.

"I tell you, mother, that those things will happen."

Hubertine adopted the course of shrugging her shoulders. And she bantered her.

"But I believe that you did not wish to get married. Your female saints, who have turned your head, did not marry. Rather than submit to marriage, they converted their fiancés, they fled from their parents' homes and allowed themselves to be beheaded."

The young girl listened in surprise. Then, she burst out into a loud laugh. All her health, all her love of living sang in this sonorous gayety. The histories of the female saints dated from so far back! The times had greatly changed, God, triumphant, no longer demanded that any one should die for him. In the Legend, it was the marvellous which had seized upon her, more than the contempt for the world and the taste for death. Ah! yes, certainly, she wished to marry, and to love, and to be loved, and to be happy!

"Look out!" pursued Hubertine, who was teasing her, "you will make Agnes, your guardian, weep. Do you not know that she refused the governor's son, and that she preferred to die in order to espouse Jesus?"

The great bell of the tower began to ring, a flock of sparrows flew away from an enormous ivy which enframed one of the windows of the arch. In the workroom, Hubert, still mute, had hung the stretched banner, yet damp with glue, that it might dry, on one of the huge

iron nails driven the wall. The sunlight, turning, changed its place, brightened up the old implements, the diligent, the osier wheels, the copper tatignon; and, as it reached the two workwomen, the frame at which they were toiling flamed, with its cylinders and its laths varnished by use, with all that lay upon the stuff, the purl and the collection of spangles, the bobbins of silk and the rods loaded with gold.

Then, in that warm radiance of spring, Angélique gazed at the huge symbolical lily which she had finished. Afterwards, opening her frank eyes widely, she answered, with her air of confident joy:

“But it is Jesus I want!”

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE BALCONY.

DESPITE her vivacious gayety, Angélique loved solitude; and it was with the joy of a veritable recreation that she found herself alone in her chamber, morning and evening: she gave the rein to herself there, enjoyed the frolic of her reveries. Sometimes even, in the course of the day, when she could run there for an instant, she was as happy as if she had gained her full freedom by flight.

The chamber, which was very large, took up half of the roof, the garret occupying the rest. It was white-washed throughout, the walls, the joists, even to the visible rafters of the mansarded portions; and, in that white bareness, the old oaken furniture seemed black. At the period of the embellishment of the salon and bed-chamber below, they had sent up there the antique furniture, dating from every epoch: a chest of the Renaissance, a table and some chairs Louis XIII. style, an enormous Louis XIV. bedstead and a very handsome Louis XV. cupboard. The stove, in white faïence, and the toilet table, a small table covered with oilcloth, alone jarred amid these venerable relics. Draped with ancient pink chintz, with bouquets of sweet broom, so faded that the pink was almost gone, the enormous bedstead, scarcely suspected, especially retained the majesty of its great age.

But what pleased Angélique was the balcony, upon which the window opened. Of the two windows of the past, one, that on the left, had been closed up simply with the aid of nails; and the balcony, which formerly ran along the whole front, no longer existed save before the window on the right. As the girders below were still sound, they had renewed the flooring and screwed an iron railing above in the place of the ancient rotted balustrade. It was a charming nook, a sort of niche, beneath the point of the gable end, which was closed by thin boards replaced at the commencement of this century. When one leaned over one saw all the façade upon the garden, which was very crazy, with its base of small, dressed stones, its sections of wood garnished with visible bricks and its large bay windows now reduced. Below, the kitchen door was surmounted by a projecting roof covered with zinc. And, above, the rafters of the roof, which projected a mètre, were consolidated by corbels, the foot of which was supported by the band of the ground-floor. This put the balcony amid a whole vegetation of woodwork, in the depths of a forest of old wood, which gilliflowers and moss rendered green.

Since she had occupied the chamber, Angélique had passed many hours there, leaning her elbows on the railing and looking. First, beneath her lay the garden, which tall box bushes made sombre with their eternal verdure; in a corner, against the church, a clump of meagre lilacs surrounded an old granite bench; while, in another corner, half-hidden by an ivy the mantle of which covered all the wall at the back, was a small door opening upon the Clos-Marie, a vast piece of ground left un-

cultivated. This Clos-Marie was the ancient orchard of the monks. A brook of running water passed through it, the Chevrotte, in which the housewives of the neighboring dwellings were authorized to wash their linen; families of poor people sheltered themselves amid the ruins of an ancient mill which had fallen down; and no one else inhabited the field, which the lane of the Guerdaches alone connected with the Rue Magloire, between the high walls of the bishop's house and those of the Hôtel Voincourt. In summer, the very aged elms of the two parks barred with their leafy tops the narrow horizon, which was closed on the south by the gigantic croup of the church. Thus wedged in on every side, the Clos-Marie slept in the quiet of its abandonment, invaded by wild grass, planted with poplars and willows which the wind had sown. Among the big pebbles, the Chevrotte bounded along, singing with continuous crystal music.

Never did Angélique tire of gazing at this sequestered corner. And yet for seven years she had found there again each morning only the spectacle already seen the day before. The trees of the Hôtel Voincourt, the façade of which looked upon the Grand'Rue, were so bushy that only in winter could she distinguish the Countess' daughter, Claire, a child of her age. In the garden of the bishop's house there was a still greater thickness of branches, she had striven in vain to recognize the violet soutane of Monseigneur; and the old grating, furnished with shutters, which opened upon the close, must have been condemned for a long while, as she did not remember having seen it open a single time, not even to give passage to a gardener. Besides the housewives

beating their linen, she never beheld any one there except the same poor children in rags, lying in the grass.

The springtime that year was of an exquisite mildness. She was sixteen, and until then her glances alone had been pleased to see the Clos-Marie grow green again beneath the April suns. The growth of the tender leaves, the transparence of the warm evenings, all the odorous renewal of the soil had simply amused her. But, that year, at the first bud, her heart had begun to beat. There had been a growing agitation within her since the grass had grown and the wind had borne her the stronger odors of the verdure. Sudden, causeless fits of anguish seized upon her. One evening, she threw herself into Hubertine's arms, weeping, but having no reason for grief; she was happy, on the contrary, experiencing joy so deep, so unknown, that her being seemed to melt. At night, especially, she had delicious dreams, she saw shadows pass, she grew faint with delights which she dare not recall on awaking, confused with the enjoyment which the angels had given her. Sometimes, in the depths of her vast bed, she awoke with a start, her two hands clasped, pressed against her bosom; and she was forced to leap out with bare feet upon the floor, to such an extent was she stifling; and she ran to open the window, she remained there, quivering, bewildered, in that bath of cool air which calmed her. It was a continual amazement, a surprise at not recognizing herself, at feeling as if she were swollen with joys and pains of which she was ignorant, all the bewitching blooming of the woman.

Why was it that the invisible lilacs and cytises of

the bishop's house had an odor so sweet that she no longer breathed it without a rosy flood mounting to her cheeks? Never before had she noticed that warmth of perfumes which now touched her with a living breath. And, also, had she not not remarked, the preceding years, a tall paulownia in bloom, the enormous violetish bouquet of which appeared between two elms of the garden of the Voincourts? This year, as soon as she looked at it, an emotion moistened her eyes, so much did that pale violet please her. In the same way, she did not recall having heard the Chevrotte babble so loudly over the pebbles, among the reeds of its banks. Surely the brook talked, she heard it utter vague words, always repeated, which filled her with confusion. Was this then no longer the field of other days, that everything there astonished her and took in this way a new sense?—or, was it she, rather, who had changed, that she felt, saw and heard life spring up there?

But the cathedral, to her right, the enormous mass which shut off the sky, surprised her more yet. Each morning, she imagined that she saw it for the first time and was stirred by her discovery, comprehending that those old stones loved and thought as she did. This was not rational, but she had no science, she abandoned herself to the mystic flight of the giant, the birth of which had lasted three centuries and upon which was superposed the belief of generations. Below, it was kneeling, crushed by prayer, with the Twelfth Century chapels of the circumference, with full arched windows, bare, ornamented only with slender little columns beneath the archivaults. Then, it felt itself upraised, the face and

hands towards heaven, with the ogive windows of the nave, constructed eighty years later, lofty, slender windows, divided by ribs and cross-springers, which bore cleft arches and roses. Then, it quitted the ground, ravished, erect, with the counterforts and the buttresses of the choir, retouched and ornamented two centuries afterwards, in the full blaze of the Gothic, loaded with little belfrys, spires and pinnacles. Spouts, at the base of the buttresses, carried off the water from the roofs. They had added a balustrade garnished with clover, bordering the terrace, upon the chapels of the arch. The roof, also, was adorned with flowerwork. And the entire edifice bloomed as it drew nearer heaven in a continual rapture, delivered from the old sacerdotal terror, going to lose itself in the bosom of a God of pardon and love. It had the physical sensation of this, it was joyous and happy as if with a hymn which it had sung, very pure, very sharp, losing itself very high above.

Besides, the cathedral lived. Swallows by hundreds had built their nests beneath the girdles of clover, even in the hollows of the little belfrys and pinnacles, and, constantly, in their flights they grazed the buttresses and counterforts which they peopled. Also the ring-doves of the elms of the bishop's house bridled up on the border of the terraces, walking with short steps like promenaders. Sometimes, lost in the blue, scarcely as big as a fly, a crow smoothed its feathers on the point of a spire. Plants, a whole flora, lichens, dog-grass which grew in the clefts of the walls, animated the old stones with the secret labor of their roots. On the days of heavy rains, the entire arch awoke and growled amid

the roaring of the shower beating the leaden sheets of the roof, flowing away through the gutters of the galleries, rolling from story to story with the din of an overflowed torrent. Even the terrible gales of wind of October and March gave it a soul; a voice of anger and complaint, when they blew through its forest of gables and arcatures, of roses and little columns. Finally, the sun gave it life with the merry play of the light, from the morning, which rejuvenated it with a blonde gayety, until the evening, which, beneath the slowly elongated shadows, buried it in the unknown. And it had its interior existence, like the throbbing of its veins, the ceremonies with which it vibrated throughout, with the peal of the bells, the music of the organs and the hymns of the priests. Life always quivered in it: confused sounds, the murmur of a low mass, the light kneeling of a woman, a shiver scarcely divined, nothing but the devout ardor of a prayer, uttered without words, with closed mouth.

Now that the days were growing longer, Angélique, morning and evening, remained for a long while with her elbows leaned on the balcony, side by side with her huge friend, the cathedral. She loved it best in the evening, when she saw only its enormous mass detach itself in a block upon the starry sky. The tiers were obscured, she barely distinguished the buttresses thrown like bridges into space. She felt that it was awake beneath the darkness, full of a dream of seven centuries, big with the crowds which had hoped and despaired before its altars. It was a continuous watch, coming from the infinite of the past, going to the eternity of the

future, the mysterious and terrifying watch of a house in which God could not sleep. And, in the black, motionless and living mass, her glances always turned to the window of a chapel of the choir, on a level with the shrubs of the Clos-Marie, the only one which was lighted up, like a vague eye open upon the night. Behind, at the angle of a pillar, burned a sanctuary lamp. This chapel happened to be the one which the abbés of the past had given to Jean V. of Hauteceœur and his descendants, with the right to be buried there, as a reward for their bounty. Consecrated to Saint George, it had a stained glass window of the Twelfth Century, upon which one saw depicted the legend of the saint. In the twilight the legend sprang up again luminous from the darkness, like an apparition; and that was why Angélique, her eyes dreamy and charmed, loved the window.

The background of the stained glass was blue and the border red. Upon this background, of a sombre richness, the personages, the bareness of whom was shown by their floating draperies, were raised in bright hues, each part made of stained glass, shaded with black, and set in lead. Three scenes of the legend, superposed, occupied the window as far as the archivault. In the lower one, the king's daughter, who had come out of the city in royal robes, to be eaten, had met Saint George beside the pool, from which already the head of the monster was emerging; and a streamer bore these words: "Goode chevalier, doe not perish for mee, as you can neither ayde nor deliver mee, but will die with mee." Then, in the centre one was the combat, the saint on

horseback, piercing the monster through and through, which was explained by this phrase: "George soe brandished his lance that hee did wounde the dragon and cast him upon the grounde." Finally, in the top one, the king's daughter was leading the vanquished monster to the city: "George sayde: 'Cast your girdle aboute his necke, and feare nothing, beauteous mayden.' And when she had donne this, the dragon followed her like a very goode-natured dogge." At the period of its erection the stained glass window must have been surmounted, in the full arch, by an ornamental motive. But, later, when the chapel belonged to the Hauteccours, they replaced this motive with their coat-of-arms. And thus it was that, during the dark nights, brilliant armorial bearings of more recent workmanship flamed above the legend. Quartered, one and four, two and three, of Jerusalem and of Hauteccœur; of Jerusalem, which was of silver with the golden cross with cross-pieces at each end, stationed with four small crosses of gold; of Hauteccœur, which was of azure with the fortress of gold, with a sable escutcheon with a heart of silver suspended, the whole accompanied by three fleurs de lys of gold, two at the top and one at the bottom. The shield was sustained on the dexter and sinister sides by two chimeras of gold, and crested in the centre by plumes of azure, by a casque of silver, damaskened with gold, placed frontwise and closed with eleven bars, which was the casque of dukes, marshals of France, titled seigneurs and chiefs of sovereign companies. And the motto was: "If God wishes, I wish."

Gradually, by dint of seeing him piercing the monster

with his lance, while the king's daughter raised her clasped hands, Angélique had acquired a passion for Saint George. At that distance, she distinguished the figures imperfectly, she saw them through the magnifying medium of a dream, the girl slender and blonde, with her own countenance, the saint, white and superb, of the beauty of an archangel. It was she whom he had just delivered and she would have kissed his hands in gratitude. And, with this adventure, of which she dreamed confusedly, a meeting on the shore of a lake, a great peril from which she was saved by a young man more beautiful than the day, was mingled the recollection of her walk to the Château of Hauteceœur, a conjuring up of the feudal donjon, standing beneath the sky, peopled by the mighty seigneurs of the past. The armorial bearings shone like a star of summer nights, she knew them well, read them fluently, with their sonorous words, she who often embroidered blazons. Jean V. stopped from door to door, in a town ravaged by the plague, went up-stairs to kiss the dying on the face and cured them by saying: "If God wishes, I wish." Félicien III., notified that a malady prevented Philippe le Bel from going to Palestine, went there for him, barefooted, a wax candle in his hand, for which a quarter of the arms of Jerusalem had been granted him. Other and still other stories were evoked, especially those of the ladies of Hauteceœur, the Happy Dead, as the legend styled them. In the family, the women had died young, in the full flush of happiness. Sometimes, two or three generations had been spared, then Death had reappeared, smiling, with gentle hands, and had car-

ried off the daughter or the wife of a Hauteœur, the oldest at twenty years of age, at the moment of some great love felicity. Laurette, daughter of Raoul I., on the evening of her betrothal with her cousin Richard, who dwelt in the château, having placed herself at her window, perceived him at his, from the tower of David to the tower of Charlemagne; and she believed that he was calling her, and as a ray of the moon threw between them a bridge of brightness, she walked towards him; but, in the middle, in her haste, a false step made her quit the ray, she fell and was crushed at the foot of the towers; so it happens that, since that time, every night when the moon is clear, she walks in the air about the château, which the mute touch of her immense robe bathes with whiteness. Balbine, wife of Hervé VII., believed for six months that her husband had been slain in the war; then, one morning while she was still waiting for him at the top of the donjon, she recognized him returning on the road, she descended on a run, so wild with joy that she died of it on the last step of the stairway; and, to-day, through the ruins, as soon as the twilight fell, she yet descended, they saw her run from story to story, flit through the passages and the rooms, pass like a shadow behind the gaping windows, open upon space. All returned, Ysabeau, Gudule, Yvonne, Austreberthe, all the Happy Dead, beloved by Death, who had spared them life by bearing them away on his wings very young, in the delight of their first happiness. On certain nights their white flight filled the château, like a flight of doves. And up to the last of them, the mother of the son of Monseigneur, whom they had found

extended lifeless before the cradle of her child, where in her sickness she had dragged herself to die, struck down by the joy of kissing him. These stories haunted Angélique's imagination: she spoke of them as realities which had occurred the night before; she had read the names of Laurette and Balbine upon old tumulary stones, let into the walls of the chapel. Then, why should she not die young, happy also? The armorial bearings shone, the saint descended from his stained glass window and she was borne away to heaven in the slight breath of a kiss.

The Legend had taught this to her: is not the miracle the common rule? It exists in the acute state, continuously, works with an extreme facility, at every turn, multiplies itself, spreads out, overflows, even uselessly, for the pleasure of nullifying the laws of nature. One lives on a familiar footing with God. Abagar, king of Edesse, writes to Jesus, who answers him. Ignace receives letters from the Virgin. In all places the Mother and the Son appear, assume disguises and chat with an air of smiling good-nature. When he meets them, Étienne is full of familiarity. All the virgins wed Jesus, and the martyrs ascend to Heaven to unite themselves to Mary. And as to the angels and saints, they are the ordinary companions of man, go, come, pass through walls, show themselves in dreams, speak from the tops of clouds, are present at births and deaths, support during tortures, deliver from dungeons, bring answers and execute commissions. Their steps are attended by an inexhaustible bloom of prodigies. Silvestre fastens the jaws of a dragon with a thread.

The soil upheaves to serve as a seat for Hilaire, whom his companions wished to humiliate. A precious stone falls in the chalice of Saint Loup. A tree crushes the enemies of Saint Martin, a dog leaves a hare and a conflagration ceases to burn when he so orders. Mary, the Egyptian, walks upon the sea, honey bees escape from the mouth of Ambroise at his birth. Continually the saints cure sore eyes, paralyzed or withered limbs, leprosy and especially the plague. Not a malady resists the sign of the cross. In a crowd, the sick and the weak are put aside to be cured en masse by a flash of lightning. Death is conquered and resurrections are so frequent that they enter into the events of each day. And, when the saints themselves have breathed their last, the prodigies do not stop, they redouble and are as the living flowers of their tombs. Two springs of oil, a sovereign remedy, flow from the feet and head of Nicholas. A perfume of roses ascends from the coffin of Cécile, when it is opened. That of Dorothée is full of manna. All the bones of the virgins and martyrs work wonders, confound liars, force robbers to restore their thefts, grant the wishes of sterile women and restore health to the dying. Nothing is any longer impossible, the invisible reigns and the only law is the caprice of the supernatural. In the temples the enchanters take part, one sees sickles cut of themselves and serpents of brass move, one hears statues of bronze laugh and wolves sing. Immediately the saints respond and overwhelm them: hosts are changed into living flesh, images of Christ let blood flow from them, sticks planted in the ground bloom, springs burst forth, loaves of warm

bread multiply at the feet of the poor, a tree bows and worships Jesus ; and, again, the cut off heads speak, the broken chalices repair themselves, the rain avoids a church to destroy the neighboring palaces, and the robes of the hermits do not wear out, but renew themselves every season like the coats of animals. In Armenia, the persecutors cast into the sea the leaden coffins of five martyrs, and that which contains the body of the apostle Barthélemy takes the head, and the four others accompany it to do it honor, and all of them, in the perfect order of a squadron, float slowly beneath the breeze, through long stretches of sea, as far as the coast of Sicily.

Angélique believed firmly in miracles. In her ignorance she lived surrounded by prodigies, the rising of the stars and the blooming of simple violets. It seemed foolish to her to imagine the world like a machine, regulated by fixed laws. So many things escaped her, she felt so bewildered, so weak, amid forces the power of which it was impossible for her to measure, and which she would not even have suspected, had it not been for the great breaths which sometimes passed over her face. Hence, like a Christian of the primitive church, fed by reading the Legend, she abandoned herself inertly in the hands of God, with the stain of original sin to efface ; she had no liberty, God alone could work her redemption by sending her the grace ; and the grace consisted in having brought her beneath the roof of the Huberts, within the shadow of the cathedral, to live a life of submission, purity and belief. She heard the hereditary evil growling in the depths of her being :

who could tell what she would have become in the natal soil?—a bad girl without doubt; whereas she was growing up in new health every season in this blessed nook. Was not the grace those surroundings composed of tales which she knew by heart, of the faith she had drunk there, of the mystic beyond in which she bathed, those surroundings of the invisible in which miracles seemed natural to her, on a level with her daily existence? They armed her for the battle of life as the grace armed the martyrs. And she created them herself without her knowledge; they were born of her imagination heated by fables, by the unconscious wishes of her girlhood, they enlarged themselves with everything of which she was ignorant, evoked themselves from the unknown which was in her and in things. All came from her to return to her, man created God to save man, nothing was there but the dream. Sometimes she grew astonished and touched her face, full of trouble, doubting her own materiality. Was she not an appearance which would vanish, after having created an illusion?

One night in May, on that balcony where she passed so many long hours, she burst into tears. She had no sorrow, she was upset by an expectation, although no one was coming. It was very dark, the Clos-Marie dug itself out like a hole of gloom beneath the sky riddled with stars, and she distinguished only the black masses of the old elms, of the bishop's house and of the Hôtel Voincourt. The stained glass window of the chapel alone was bright. If no one were coming, why then did her heart beat thus, with heavy throbs? It was an expectation which dated from afar, from the depths of her

childhood, an expectation which had grown with age to result in that anxious fever of her seventeen years. Nothing would have surprised her, for weeks she had heard voices buzzing in that corner of mystery peopled by her imagination. The Legend had let loose there its supernatural world of male and female saints, a miracle was about to bloom there. She well understood that all was animated, that the voices came from things silent in the past, that the leaves of the trees, the waters of the Chevrotte and the stones of the cathedral were talking to her. But whom were the whispers of the invisible thus announcing, what did those unknown forces, breathing from the beyond and floating in the air, wish to make of her? She remained with her eyes upon the darkness, as if at a rendezvous which no one had given her, and she waited, waited constantly, until ready to fall with sleep, while she felt the unknown deciding upon her life in spite of her own will.

During four evenings, Angélique wept thus, in the sombre darkness. She returned there and was patient. The envelopment around her continued, augmented each evening, as if the horizon had contracted and oppressed her. The things weighed upon her heart, the voices now buzzed in the depths of her skull, though she could not hear them any more distinctly. It was a slow taking possession, all nature, the earth with its vast sky entering into her being. At the slightest sound her hands burned and her eyes strove to pierce the gloom. Was it at last the expected prodigy? No, nothing yet, nothing but the flapping of the wings of a bird of the night, without doubt. And she listened again, she dis-

tinguished even the different rustling of the leaves, in the elms and in the willows. Twenty times thus a quiver shook her all over when a stone rolled into the brook or a roving animal glided from a wall. She bent forward, fainting. Nothing, nothing yet.

Finally, one evening, when a warmer obscurity was falling from a moonless sky, something began. She feared she was deceiving herself, it was so slight, almost imperceptible, a little sound, new among the sounds with which she was acquainted. It was slow in reproducing itself, she held her breath. Then, it was heard louder, but still confused. She thought it the distant noise, scarcely divined, of a footfall, that trembling of the air announcing an approach, beyond sight and hearing. What she was awaiting was coming from the invisible, was emerging slowly from all that quivered about her. Piece by piece it disengaged itself from her dream, like a realization of the vague wishes of her girlhood. Was it the Saint George of the stained glass window, who, with his mute feet of a painted image, was treading down the high grass to climb up to her? The window just then was pale, she no longer saw the saint clearly, but like a little purple cloud, blurred and evaporated. That night she was unable to learn more. But the next night, at the same hour, in the same obscurity, the sound augmented, approached somewhat. It was a sound of footsteps, certainly, of dream footsteps grazing the ground. They ceased, they were resumed, here and there, without it being possible for her to locate them. Perhaps they came to her from the garden of the Voincourts, some nocturnal promenader delayed

beneath the elms. Perhaps, rather, they came from the bushy groves of the bishop's house, from the huge lilacs the violent odor of which stifled her. In vain did she search the darkness, only her hearing warned her of the expected prodigy and also her sense of smell, that increased perfume of the flowers, as if a breath had been mixed with it. And, during several nights, the circle of the footsteps narrowed beneath the balcony, she heard them advance to the wall at her feet. There they stopped and a long silence then ensued, and the envelopment was completed, that slow and growing pressure of the unknown in which she felt herself fainting.

The following evenings, among the stars, she saw the slender crescent of the new moon appear. But the orb declined with the closing day and went off behind the roof of the cathedral, like an eye of lively brightness which the lid covers. She followed it, watched it enlarge at each twilight, impatient for that torch which would finally light up the invisible. Little by little, in fact, the Clos-Marie emerged from the obscurity, with the ruins of its old mill, its clumps of trees and its rapid brook. And then, in the light, the creation continued. What had come from the dream finished by assuming the shadow of a body. For she perceived at first only a dim shadow, moving beneath the moon. What was it? —the shadow of a branch swayed by the wind? Sometimes everything vanished, the field slept in an immobility of death and she believed the whole matter an hallucination of her sight. Then, doubt was no longer possible: a dark stain had crossed a lighted space, gliding from one willow to another. She lost it, found it again,

without ever succeeding in defining it. One evening, she believed she recognized the swift flight of two shoulders, and her eyes turned instantly towards the stained glass window: it was grayish, as if empty, faded by the moon, which cast its full brightness upon it. From that moment she noticed that the living shadow lengthened, approached her window, advancing constantly from dark holes to dark holes among the grass along the church. In proportion as she divined it nearer, an increasing emotion took possession of her, that nervous sensation one feels on being looked at by mysterious eyes which one does not see. Surely, a being was there, beneath the leaves, who, with lifted glances, was constantly watching her. She had upon her hands, upon her visage, the physical impression of those glances, long, very mild and even timid; she did not hide herself from them, because she felt that they were pure, come from the enchanted world of the Legend; and her first anxiety was changed into a delicious trouble, in her certainty of happiness. One night, suddenly, upon the ground white with moonlight, the shadow was stamped in a frank and clear outline, the shadow of a man whom she could not see, hidden behind the willows. The man did not stir, and she watched the shadow.

From that time Angélique had a secret. Her bare, whitewashed chamber, all white, was full of it. She remained for hours in her vast bed, where she lost herself, so slight, her eyes closed, but not sleeping, constantly seeing again that motionless shadow upon the shining ground. At dawn, when she reopened her eyelids, her glances went from the enormous cupboard to the

old chest, from the faïence stove to the little toilet table, in her surprise at not finding there the mysterious silhouette, which she could have drawn with a sure stroke from memory. While asleep she had seen it glide among the pale sweet broom of her curtains. Her dreams, like her watch on the balcony, were peopled by it. It was a shadow companion of hers, she had two shadows, although she was alone with her dream. And she did not confide this secret to any one, not even to Hubertine, to whom until then she had told everything. When the latter questioned her, astonished at her joy, she grew very red and answered that the precocious spring made her joyous. From morning until evening she hummed, like a fly intoxicated with the early sunshine. Never had the chasubles which she embroidered flamed with such a splendor of silk and gold. The Huberts, smiling, simply believed her in excellent health. Her gayety increased in proportion as the day drew nearer its close, she sang when the moon rose, and when the hour had arrived she bent over the balcony and saw the shadow. During the whole quarter she found it punctual at each rendezvous, straight and silent, without being able to discover more, ignorant of the being that produced it. Was it then but a shadow, an appearance only, perhaps the saint vanished from the stained glass window, perhaps the angel who had loved Cécile in the past and who had descended to love her in her turn? This thought made her proud, was very agreeable to her, like a caress come from the invisible. Then she was seized with impatience to become acquainted with it and her waiting recommenced.

The moon, at its full, lighted up the Clos-Marie. When it was at the zenith, the trees, beneath the white light which fell perpendicularly, had no longer any shadows, like fountains gushing with mute brightness. The entire field was bathed with it, a luminous flood filled it, of the limpidity of crystal; and the brilliancy of it was so penetrating that one could even distinguish the fine nicks in the leaves of the willows. The least quiver of the air seemed to wrinkle this lake of rays, asleep in its sovereign peace, between the tall elms of the neighboring gardens and the gigantic croup of the cathedral.

Two more evenings had passed, when, the third night, on coming to lean over the balcony, Angélique received a violent shock at her heart. There, in the vivid brightness, she saw him standing, turned towards her. His shadow, as well as those of the trees, was shrunk beneath his feet, had disappeared. There was no longer anything there but him, very distinct. At that distance, she saw him as in broad day, aged twenty, fair, tall and slender. He resembled Saint George, a superb Jesus, with his curly locks, his slight beard, his straight nose, somewhat strong, and his black eyes of a stately mildness. And she recognized him perfectly: never had she beheld him otherwise, it was he, it was thus that she had expected him. The prodigy was accomplished at last, the slow creation of the invisible had resulted in this living apparition. He had come from the unknown, from the quiver of things, from the murmuring voices, from the moving play of the darkness, from all that which had enveloped her, even to making

her faint. She also saw him two feet from the ground, in the supernaturalness of his coming, while the miracle surrounded him on every side, floating upon the mysterious lake of the moon. He had for his escort all the people of the Legend, the saints whose rods bloomed, the female saints whose wounds sent forth showers of milk. And the white flight of the virgins paled the stars.

Angélique gazed at him steadily. He raised both his arms and extended them, wide open. She was not afraid, she smiled upon him.

CHAPTER V.

FÉLICIEN.

IT was an important affair, every three months, when Hubertine prepared the lye for washing. They hired a woman, Mère Gabet; during four days the embroideries were forgotten; and Angélique herself participated in it, and afterwards made a recreation for herself of the soaping and rinsing in the clear waters of the Chevrotte. When the linen came out of the lye, they took it in a wheelbarrow through the little communicating door. They lived during the days in the Clos-Marie, in the open air and the glaring sunlight.

“Mother, this time I am going to wash, it amuses me so much!”

And, shaken with laughter, her sleeves rolled up above her elbows, brandishing the beater, Angélique tapped stoutly, in the joy and healthfulness of that rude toil which splashed her with suds.

“It hardens my arms and does me good, mother!”

The Chevrotte cut the field obliquely, at first calm, then very rapid, rushing down a pebbly slope. It emerged from the garden of the bishop's house through a sort of flood-gate, left at the base of the wall; and, at the other end, at the angle of the Hôtel Voincourt, it disappeared beneath a vaulted arch, plunged into the ground, to reappear, two hundred mètres further away, all along the Rue Basse, as far as the Ligneul, where it emptied.

Hence it was imperative to keep a watch on the linen, for in vain one ran: every piece dropped was a piece lost.

"Mother, wait, wait! I am going to put this big stone on the napkins. We'll see if it will carry them off, the thief!"

She put down the stone, she turned to pull another from the ruins of the mill, delighted to expend her strength, to fatigue herself; and, when she had bruised a finger, she shook it, she said it was nothing. During the day, the family of poor people, who had taken shelter beneath those ruins, went away in quest of alms, scattered over the roads. The close remained solitary, of a delicious and cool solitude, with its clumps of pale willows, its tall poplars, its grass especially, its overflow of wild grass, so luxuriant that it came up to one's shoulders. A quivering silence came from the two neighboring parks, the huge trees of which barred the horizon. From three o'clock the shadow of the cathedral stretched out, of a religious mildness, of an evaporated perfume of incense.

And she beat the linen harder, with all the strength of her fresh and white arm.

"Mother, mother! how I shall eat this evening! Ah! you know, you promised me a strawberry tart!"

But, for that wash, the rinsing day, Angélique remained alone. Mère Gabet, suffering from a sudden crisis of her sciatica, had not come; and other household cares kept Hubertine at home. Kneeling in her box lined with straw, the young girl took the pieces one by one, shook them for a long time, until they no longer

discolored the water, of a limpidity of crystal. She did not hasten, she had felt since morning an uneasy curiosity, having been astonished to find there an old workman in a gray blouse, who was erecting a light scaffold before the window of the Hauteœur chapel. Did they wish to repair the stained glass window? It had great need of it: glasses were lacking in the Saint George; others, broken in the course of centuries, were replaced by plain glass. However, this irritated her. She was so accustomed to the gaps in the saint piercing the dragon, and in the king's daughter leading it away with her girdle, that she was already lamenting them, as if it had been the design to mutilate them. There was sacrilege in changing things so old. And suddenly, when she came back from breakfast, her anger vanished: a second workman was upon the scaffold, a young man, also clad in a gray blouse. And she had recognized him, it was he.

Gayly, without embarrassment, Angélique resumed her place, on her knees in the straw of her box. Then, with her bare wrists, she resumed shaking the linen in the depths of the clear water. It was he, tall, slender, fair, with his slight beard and his curly locks of a young god, with skin as white as she had seen him beneath the whiteness of the moon. Since it was he, the stained glass window had nothing to fear: if he touched it, he would embellish it. And she experienced no disillusion on finding him again clad in that blouse, a toiler like herself, a glass painter without doubt. That, on the contrary, made her smile, in her absolute belief in her dream of royal fortune. There was only appearance. What was the good of knowing? Some morning he

would be what he ought to be. The rain of gold gushed from the roof of the cathedral, a triumphal march burst forth amid the distant roar of the organs. She did not even ask herself what road he took to be there night and day. Unless he dwelt in one of the neighboring mansions, he could pass only through the lane of the Guerdaches, which ran along the wall of the bishop's house as far as the Rue Magloire.

Then, a charming hour passed. She bent over, she rinsed her linen, her face almost touching the cool water; but, at each new piece, she raised her head and cast a glance in which, amid the agitation of her heart, was just a suspicion of mischief. And he, upon the scaffold, with the air of being greatly occupied in ascertaining the condition of the stained glass window, glanced at her sidewise, disconcerted when she surprised him thus, turned towards her. It was astonishing how quickly his exceedingly white face turned red, its tint suddenly colored. At the slightest emotion, anger or tenderness, all the blood of his veins mounted to his face. He had eyes of battle, and he was so timid when he felt that she was examining him that he again became a little child, embarrassed by his hands, stammering out orders to the old man, his companion. What delighted her, in that water the turbulence of which cooled her arms, was to divine him innocent like herself, ignorant of everything, with the greedy desire to bite at life. One has no need to say aloud what he is, invisible messengers announce it, dumb mouths repeat it. She raised her head, surprised him turning his away, and the minutes flew by, and that was delicious.

Suddenly she saw him spring from the scaffold, then walk backwards away from it through the grass, as if to take the field in order to get a better view. But she nearly bursting out laughing, so clear was it that he merely wished to get nearer to her. When he had leaped down, it was with the fierce decision of a man who risked everything, and now the touching drollery was that he remained planted a few paces away, turning his back to her, not daring to wheel about, mortally embarrassed by his too impulsive action. For an instant she believed that he would set off again towards the stained glass window, as he had come, without casting a glance behind. However, he took a desperate resolution, he turned; and, as she had just raised her head with her mischievous laugh, their glances met, remained one within the other. Both of them were greatly confused by this: they lost countenance, they would never have come out of it had not a dramatic incident happened.

“Oh! mon Dieu!” cried she, distracted.

In her emotion, the dimity camisole, which she had been rinsing with an unconscious hand, had escaped from her; and the rapid brook was bearing it away; and in another minute it would disappear, at the corner of the wall of the Voincourts, beneath the vaulted arch into which the Chevrotte plunged.

There were a few seconds of anguish. He had understood and sprung forward. But the current was bounding over the pebbles and that fiend of a camisole flew along more quickly than he. He bent down, believing it in his grasp, but seizing only a handful of foam. He missed it twice. Finally, excited, with the brave air

with which one casts one's self at the peril of one's life, he entered the water and saved the camisole just at the moment when it was about diving into the ground.

Angélique, who, up to that time, had anxiously followed the attempt at rescue, felt laughter, hearty laughter ascend from her sides. Ah! that adventure which she had dreamed about so much, that meeting on the border of a lake, that terrible danger from which a young man more beautiful than the day delivered her! Saint George, the tribune, the warrior, was only that painter on glass, that young workman in a gray blouse! When she saw him return, his legs soaked, holding the dripping camisole in an awkward fashion, comprehending the ridiculousness of the excitement he had displayed in snatching it from the flood, she was forced to bite her lips to restrain the burst of gayety which was tickling her throat.

He forgot himself in looking at her. She was so adorable in her childishness, in that laughter which she suppressed and with which all her youth vibrated! Splashed with water, her arms cooled by the current, she gave forth an odor of purity, of the limpidity of living springs gushing from the moss of forests. She was health and joy in the broad sunlight. One divined in her the good housewife and the queen besides, in her work dress, with her straight form, her long visage of a king's daughter, such as is found in the depths of the legends. And he no longer knew how to return her the linen, so beautiful did he think her, of the beauty of art which he loved. What enraged him more was to have the air of a simpleton, for he perceived very clearly the

effort she was making in order not to laugh. He was forced to come to a decision, he handed her the camisole.

Then, Angélique comprehended that, if she opened her lips, she would burst out. That poor fellow! he touched her greatly; but it was irresistible, she was too happy, she was overflowing with a need of laughing, of laughing until her breath was gone.

Finally, she believed that she could speak and endeavored simply to say:

“Thank you, monsieur.”

But the laughter had returned, the laughter made her stammer, checked her words; and the laughter rang out very loudly, a rain of sonorous notes, which sang to the crystalline accompaniment of the Chevrotte. He, disconcerted, said nothing, not a word. His white face had suddenly turned purple; his eyes of a timid child flamed, like the eyes of an eagle. And he went away, he disappeared with the old workman while she was still laughing, bent over the clear water, splashing herself anew in rinsing her linen, in the glorious happiness of that day.

On the morrow, as early as six o'clock, they spread out the linen, the mass of which had been draining since the previous day. It happened that a strong wind had arisen which aided the drying. In order that the pieces might not be blown away, they were even compelled to fasten them down with stones at the four corners. All the wash was there, spread out, very white amid the green grass, giving forth the good odor of plants; and the field seemed to have suddenly bloomed into snowy sheets of Easter daisies.

After breakfast, when she returned to take a look

around, Angélique was filled with despair: the entire wash threatened to blow away, so strong had the gusts of wind grown, in the blue sky, of a bright limpidity, as if purified by those great puffs; and already a sheet had gone, napkins had plastered themselves upon the branches of a willow. She caught the napkins. But, behind her, some handkerchiefs started off. And nobody was there! —she was losing her head! When she strove to spread out the sheet, she was forced to struggle with it. It stunned her, enveloped her with the flapping of a flag.

In the wind, she then heard a voice which said:

“Mademoiselle, would you like me to help you?”

It was he, and immediately she cried, without other preoccupation than her anxiety as a housewife:

“Of course, help me, please! Take the end down there and hold on tightly!”

The sheet, which they stretched with their strong arms, flapped like a sail. Then, they placed it upon the grass, they put heavier stones at the four corners. And, now when it had sunk down, subdued, neither he nor she arose from their kneeling posture at the two ends, separated by that big piece of linen of a dazzling whiteness.

She finished by smiling, but without mischief, her smile was one of thankfulness. He grew bolder.

“I am called Félicien.”

“And I Angélique.”

“I am a painter on glass, they have engaged me to repair that stained glass window.”

“I live there, with my parents, and I am an embroiderer.”

The high wind bore away their words, flagellated them

with its vivacious purity, in the warm sunlight with which they were bathed. They told each other things that they knew, for the pleasure of saying them to each other.

"They are not going to replace the stained glass window, are they?"

"No, no. The repairs will not even be seen. I love it as much as you do."

"That's true, I love it. It has such a soft color! I have embroidered a Saint George, but it was not so handsome."

"Oh! not so handsome! I have seen it, if it is the Saint George of the red velvet chasuble which the Abbé Cornille had on Sunday. A marvel!"

She blushed with pleasure and suddenly cried to him:

"Put a stone on the edge of the sheet, to your left. The wind is going to take it from us again!"

He made haste, weighted the linen which had had a great palpitation, the beating of wings of a captive bird, endeavoring to fly again. And, as it no longer stirred, this time, they both arose. Now, she walked along the narrow pathways of grass, between the pieces, casting a glance at each one; while he followed her, very busy, with the air of being enormously preoccupied by the possible loss of an apron or a dish-cloth. This seemed altogether natural. Hence she continued to chat, relating her days' doings and explaining her tastes.

"As for me, I like things to be in their places. In the morning, a cuckoo clock in the workroom awakens

me always at six o'clock; and even if it should not be light I could dress myself very quickly: my stockings are here, the soap is there—a regular mania. Oh! I was not born that way, I was disorderly! Mother was forced to say a great deal about it! And, in the work-room, I would not do any good, if my chair were not in the same place, facing the light. Fortunately, I am neither left-handed nor right-handed, and I embroider with both hands, which is an accomplishment, for everybody cannot do it. It's like the flowers which I adore, I cannot keep a bouquet of them beside me without having terrible headaches. I can stand only violets, and it's surprising, their odor rather calms me. At the least bad feeling I have but to smell violets and I am relieved."

He listened to her, delighted. He intoxicated himself with the sonority of her voice, which had an extreme, penetrating and prolonged charm; and he must have been particularly sensitive to that human music, for the caressing inflexion upon certain syllables moistened his eyes.

"Ah!" said she, interrupting herself, "the camisoles have soon dried."

Then, she finished her confidences, in the innocent and unconscious need of making herself known.

"White is always beautiful, is it not? On certain days I have enough of blue, of red, of all the colors; while white is an absolute joy of which I never tire. There is nothing wounding about it, one wishes to lose one's self in it. We had a white cat, with yellow spots, and I painted its spots. It looked very well, but the

color did not hold. See here!—what my mother does not know is that I keep all the white silk waste, I have a drawer full of it, for nothing, for the pleasure of looking at the bits and touching them from time to time. And I have another secret, oh! it's a big one! When I wake every morning, there is some one beside my bed, yes! a whiteness which flies away!"

He did not smile, he seemed firmly to believe her. Was it not simple and in the order of things? A young princess would not have conquered him so quickly, amid the magnificence of her court. She had, in the midst of all that white linen, upon that green grass, a grand air, charming, joyous and sovereign, which seized upon his heart with a growing pressure. It was done, there was nothing but her, he would follow her to the end of life. She continued to walk, with her short, rapid step, and he still came on behind her, choking with this happiness, without any hope of ever attaining it.

But a gust broke forth, a lot of small linen, percale collars and cuffs, batiste fichus and neckerchiefs, sailed off and settled in the distance like a flock of white birds bowled along by a tempest.

And Angélique began to run.

"Ah! mon Dieu! make haste, help me!"

Both of them dashed along. She caught a collar on the edge of the Chevrotte. He already held two neckerchiefs recovered amid some tall nettles. The cuffs, one by one, were reconquered. But, in their fleet skurryings, thrice had she grazed him with the flying folds of her skirt; and, each time, his heart had given a leap,

his face had suddenly turned red. In his turn he grazed her, as he made a bound to overtake the last fichu, which was escaping from him. She was standing motionless, panting. A trouble drowned her laughter, she no longer joked, no longer made fun of that tall, innocent and awkward young fellow. What was the matter with her, that she was no longer merry and yielded thus to this delicious anguish? When he offered her the fichu, their hands chanced to touch. They gave a start and contemplated each other in bewilderment. She drew back quickly, she stood for several seconds without knowing what course to take in the extraordinary catastrophe which had happened to her. Then, all at once, frightened, she ran away, escaped, her arms full of small linen, abandoning the rest.

Félicien then strove to speak.

“Oh! in pity—I beg of you——”

The wind had redoubled, it took away his breath. In despair, he watched her running as if that high wind had carried her off. She was running amid the whiteness of the sheets and tablecloths, in the pale gold of the slanting sun. The shadow of the cathedral seemed to seize upon her, and she was on the point of going into the house, through the little door of the garden, without casting a look behind. But, on the threshold, she turned quickly, seized with a sudden kindness, not wishing that he should believe her too angry. And, confused, smiling, she cried out: “Thank you! thank you!”

Was it for aiding her to recover her linen that she thanked him? Was it for something else? She had vanished and the door had closed after her.

And he stood alone, in the middle of the field, beneath the great, regular gusts, which blowed vivifyingly in the clear sky. The elms of the bishop's house were shaken with a rolling scund like the surge of the sea, a loud voice clamored through the terraces and the buttresses of the cathedral. But he heard only the light flapping of a little cap, fastened to a lilac branch like a white bouquet, and which was hers.

From that day forward, every time Angélique opened her window, she saw Félicien below, in the Clos-Marie. He had the pretext of the stained glass window, he lived there, though the work did not advance the least in the world. For hours he forgot himself behind a bush, stretched out on the grass, watching between the leaves. And it was so sweet to exchange a smile, morning and evening. She, in her happiness, demanded nothing more. The lye washing would not occur again for three months, and until then the garden door would remain closed. But, by dint of seeing each other daily, three months would very quickly pass!—and, besides, was there a greater happiness than to live on in that way, through the day for the glance at evening, through the night for the glance in the morning?

At the time of the first meeting, Angélique had told everything, her habits, her tastes and the little secrets of her heart. He, silent, had said his name was Félicien, and she knew no other thing about him. Perhaps that was the way it ought to be, the woman giving herself wholly, the man reserving himself in the unknown. She felt no hasty curiosity, but smiled at the idea of things that would surely be realized. Besides, what she

was ignorant of did not count, seeing each other only was important. She knew nothing about him, and yet she knew him so well that she could read his thoughts in his looks. He had come, she had recognized him and they loved each other.

Then, they deliciously enjoyed that possession at a distance. It was an unceasing round of new delights, because of the discoveries they made. She had long hands, pricked by the needle, which he adored. She noticed his small feet and was proud of their smallness. Everything in him flattered her, she was grateful to him for being handsome, she experienced a violent joy the evening she ascertained that his beard was of a more ash-colored fairness than his hair, which gave his laugh an extreme sweetness. He went away bewildered with intoxication one morning when she had bent over and he had seen a brown mark on her delicate neck. Their hearts also were unfolded to each other and furnished them with treasure-troves. Certainly, the ingenuous and haughty movement with which she opened the window said that, though but a little embroiderer, she possessed the soul of a queen. In the same way, he felt that she was kind, on seeing with what a light step she trod down the grass. A radiance of qualities and graces was about them at this early hour of their acquaintance. Each interview brought its charm. It seemed to them that they would never exhaust this felicity of seeing each other.

Nevertheless, Félicien soon showed some impatience. He no longer remained stretched out for hours at the foot of a bush, in the immobility of absolute happiness.

As soon as Angélique appeared, leaning on the balcony rail, he grew uneasy and strove to draw nearer to her, and this at last angered her a little, for she feared that he might be seen. One day there was even a real quarrel: he advanced as far as the wall and she felt compelled to quit the balcony. It was a catastrophe, he was upset by it, with a visage so eloquent of submission and entreaty that she forgave him on the morrow, when at the usual hour she came to lean on the balcony. But expectation no longer sufficed for him, and he recommenced. Now, he seemed to be everywhere at once in the Clos-Marie, which he filled with his excitement. He emerged from behind each tree trunk and appeared above each tuft of briars. Like the ring-doves of the tall elms, he appeared to have his dwelling in the vicinity, between two branches. The Chevrotte was a pretext for him to live there, bent over the current, in which he had the air of following the flight of the clouds. One day she saw him among the ruins of the mill, standing upon the frame of a torn out shed, happy at being thus elevated a trifle, in his regret that he could not fly to her shoulder. Another day she stifled a slight cry on perceiving him above her, between two windows of the cathedral, upon the terrace of the choir chapels. How had he succeeded in reaching that gallery, closed by a door of which the beadle kept the key? How was it, at other times, that she found him away up in the sky, among the buttresses of the nave and the pinnacles of the counterforts? From those heights, he plunged his gaze into the depths of her chamber, like the swallows flying about the points of the little belfries, which

saw her without her having the idea of concealing herself. And, from that time, she barricaded herself, and a growing trouble seized upon her, at finding herself invaded, at being always two. If she was not in haste, why then did her heart beat so strongly, like the hum of the belfry in the loud ringing of the great fêtes?

Three days passed, during which Angélique did not show herself, frightened by Félicien's increasing audacity. She swore to herself that she would see him no more, she excited herself to the point of detesting him. But he had communicated his fever to her, she could not remain still, any pretext was good enough for her to leave the chasuble which she was embroidering. Hence, having learned that Mère Gabet was confined to her bed, in the deepest poverty, she went to visit her every morning. The house was on the Rue des Orfèvres, only three doors distant. She arrived with soup and sugar, and went down-stairs again to buy medicines at the pharmacy on the Grand'Rue. And, one day when she had returned, with her hands full of vials, she was amazed to find Félicien at the bedside of the sick old woman. He grew very red and slunk away awkwardly. The following day, as she was departing, he presented himself again, and she discontentedly left him there. Did he wish to prevent her from seeing her poor? It chanced that she had just then been seized upon by one of those crises of charity which made her give away everything in order to load with benefits those who had nothing. Her being melted with pitiful fraternity at the idea of suffering. She ran to the house of Père Mascart, a blind paralytic of the Rue Basse, to whom she fed

with her own hands the bowl of soup which she had brought him; to the house of the Chouteaus, man and wife, two old folks of ninety, who occupied a cellar on the Rue Magloire, where she had brought old furniture taken from the garret of the Huberts; to the houses of others and of others still, to the houses of all the wretched ones of the quarter, whom she regaled in secret with things lying about her, delighted to surprise them and to see them radiant because of something that had been left over the day before. And henceforth everywhere she went she met Félicien! Never had she seen so much of him, she who shunned going to the window from the fear of seeing him again. Her trouble was augmented and she believed herself very angry.

In this adventure the worst really was that Angélique soon despaired of her charity. This young man spoiled for her the joy of being good. Formerly he, perhaps, had other poor people, but not those, for he had not visited them; and he must have watched her, come upstairs behind her to become acquainted with them and to take them from her thus, one after the other. Now, every time she arrived at the house of the Chouteaus, with a basket of provisions, there was money upon the table. One day when she hastened to carry ten sous, her savings of the entire week, to Père Mascart, who incessantly lamented that he could get no tobacco, she found him rich with a twenty-franc piece, shining like a sun. One evening even, when she was visiting Mère Gabet, the latter begged her to get a bank note changed for her. And what a great grief it was to realize her powerlessness, she who lacked money, when he so easily emptied

his purse! Certainly, she was glad of the windfall for her poor; but she had no further happiness in giving, sad at giving so little when another gave so much. The awkward fellow, not understanding, thinking to conquer her, yielded to a soft-hearted need of bounty bestowing, redoubled his charity and nullified her alms. Without counting that she was compelled to hear his praises at the houses of all the poverty-stricken: a young man so kind, so gentle, so polite! They talked only of him, they spread out his gifts as if to undervalue hers! Despite her oath to forget him, she questioned them in regard to him: what had he left?—what had he said?—and he was handsome, was he not?—and tender and timid! Perhaps he had dared to speak of her? Ah! of course, he spoke about her constantly! Then, she execrated him decidedly, for she had at last become thoroughly disgusted with it all.

But matters could not continue in that way; and one May evening, during a glorious twilight, the catastrophe occurred. It was at the Lemballeuses', the brood of beggars who had found shelter in the ruins of the old mill. Only females were there, Mère Lemballeuse, an old creature seamed with wrinkles, Tiennette, the eldest daughter, a tall savage of twenty, and her two little sisters, Rose and Jeanne, their eyes already bold beneath their unkempt red hair. All four begged on the roads, along the ditches, and returned at night, their feet sore with fatigue in their old shoes tied together with twine. And, that evening, Tiennette, having left the remains of hers among the stones, had returned wounded, her ankles bleeding. Seated before their door, amid the tall

grass of the Clos-Marie, she was pulling thorns from her flesh, while her mother and the two little ones were lamenting around her.

At that moment Angélique arrived, hiding under her apron the loaf of bread which she gave them every week. She had escaped through the little door of the garden and had left it open behind her, for she intended to run back. But the sight of the whole family in tears stopped her.

"What is the trouble? What ails you?"

"Ah! my good demoiselle," groaned Mère Lemballeuse, "see in what a condition that great fool has gotten herself! To-morrow she'll not be able to walk and it will be a day lost. One must have shoes."

Their eyes flaming beneath their unkempt hair, Rose and Jeanne redoubled their sobs, crying, in sharp tones:

"One must have shoes, one must have shoes!"

Tiennette had half-raised her thin, dark face. Then, fiercely, without a word, she had made herself bleed again by picking away at a long splinter with a pin.

Much affected, Angélique bestowed her alms.

"Here's a loaf of bread at all events."

"Oh! bread," resumed the mother, "without doubt it's necessary. But she cannot walk with bread, that's certain. And it's the fair at Bligny, a fair at which she makes every year more than forty sous. Bon Dieu de bon Dieu! what is going to become of us?"

Pity and embarrassment made Angélique mute. She had only five sous in her pocket. With five sous one could hardly buy a pair of shoes, even for a makeshift. Every time her lack of money paralyzed her. And, at

that minute, what put the finishing touch to her rage was, as she turned her eyes, to perceive Félicien, standing a few paces off, in the growing darkness. He must have heard, perhaps he had been there for some time. It was always thus that he appeared to her, without her ever knowing how or why he had come.

"He will give the shoes," thought she.

In fact, he was already advancing. In the violetish sky the first stars were born. A great warm peace fell from on high and put to sleep the Clos-Marie, the willows of which were drowned in the obscurity. The cathedral was nothing but a black bar against the setting sun.

"Certainly, he will give the shoes."

And at this she felt genuine despair. He would give everything, then, not a single time would she vanquish him! Her heart beat as if it would burst, she would have liked to have been very rich, in order to show him that she also made people happy.

But the Lemballeuses had seen the kind gentleman, the mother had sprung forward, the two little sisters whimpered with outstretched hands, while the tall girl, leaving her bleeding ankles, stared with her oblique eyes.

"Listen, my good woman," said Félicien, "go into the Grand'Rue, at the corner of the Rue Basse——"

Angélique had understood, the shop of a shoemaker was there. She interrupted him quickly, so agitated that she stammered out words at hazard.

"That will be a useless trip! What is the good of it? There is a much easier way——"

And she did not find that easier way. What could she do, what could she invent to get ahead of him in his alms-giving? She would never have believed that she could detest him so much.

"You will say that I sent you," resumed Félicien. "You will ask——"

Again she interrupted him, repeating with an anxious air:

"There is a much easier way—there is a much easier way——"

Suddenly growing calm, she sat down on a stone, untied her shoes, took them off, took off even her stockings, with a quick hand.

"See! it's so easy! Why put one's self out?"

"Ah! my kind demoiselle, God will reward you!" cried Mère Lemballeuse, as she examined the shoes, which were almost new. "I will rip the uppers to make them fit. Tiennette, thank her, you great fool!"

Tiennette tore from the hands of Rose and Jeanne the stockings which they coveted. She did not open her lips.

But, at that moment, Angélique perceived that her feet were bare and that Félicien saw them. She was covered with confusion. She dare not stir, certain that, if she arose, he would see more of them. Then she grew alarmed, lost her head and started to flee. In the grass, as she ran, her little feet looked very white. The darkness had increased, the Clos-Marie had become a lake of gloom, between the neighboring tall trees and the black mass of the cathedral. And in it, on a level with the shadows of the ground, there was only the flight of the little white feet, of the satiny white of doves.

Terrified, afraid of the water, Angélique followed the Chevrotte, in order to reach the plank which served as a bridge. But Félicien had cut across the bushes. So timid until then, he had grown redder than she on seeing her white feet; and a flame urged him on, he would have liked to cry out the passion which had possessed him wholly since the first day, in the overflow of his youth. Then, when she grazed him, he could but stammer the confession with which his lips burned:

“I love you!”

She had stopped in bewilderment. Drawing herself up, she looked at him for an instant. Her anger, the hatred that she had believed she had, vanished, melted into a feeling of delicious anguish. What had he said, that she should be upset by it in that way? She knew that he loved her and yet the words murmured in her ear confounded her with astonishment and terror. Emboldened, his heart open and drawn nearer to hers by their accomplice, charity, he repeated:

“I love you!”

And she resumed her flight, in her fear of the lover.

The Chevrotte no longer stopped her, she went into it like the pursued hinds, and her little white feet ran there among the pebbles, quivering in the cold water. The door of the garden closed again and they vanished.

CHAPTER VI.

MONSEIGNEUR'S MITRE.

FOR two days, Angélique was torn by remorse. As soon as she was alone, she sobbed, as if she had committed a fault. And the question, of a frightful obscurity, constantly recurred: had she sinned with that young man? Was she lost, like those bad women of the Legend who yielded to the devil? The words, murmured so faintly: "I love you!" resounded with such a clamor in her ear that they certainly came from some terrible power, hidden in the depths of the invisible. But she did not know, she could not know, in the ignorance in which she had grown up.

Had she sinned with that young man? And she strove to clearly recall the facts, she discussed the scruples of her innocence. What then was sin? Did it consist in seeing each other, in chatting and in lying afterwards to parents? That could not be all the evil. Then, why was she stifling thus? Why, if she were not guilty, did she feel herself becoming another than she had been, agitated by a new soul? Perhaps sin was springing up there, in that dull suffering with which she was growing weak. Her heart was full of vague, indeterminate things, a whole confusion of words and acts to come, with which she terrified herself before understanding them. A flood of blood empurpled her cheeks, she heard burst forth the terrifying words: "I love you!"

and she no longer argued, she resumed sobbing, doubting the facts, fearing the fault beyond, in that which had no name and no form.

Her great torment was that she had not confided in Hubertine. If she could have questioned her, the latter would, no doubt, have revealed the mystery to her in a word. Then, it seemed to her that merely to talk to some one of her misfortune would cure it. But the secret had become too weighty, she would have died of shame. She resorted to tricks and affected tranquil airs when a tempest was raging in the depths of her being. When she was questioned with regard to her reveries, she raised her eyes in surprise, answering that she was thinking of nothing. Seated before her frame, her hands mechanically plying the needle, very staid looking, she was torn by a single thought from morning till night. To be loved, to be loved! And she, in her turn, did she love? That was another obscure question which her ignorance left unanswered. She repeated it to herself until she was stunned, the words lost their usual sense and everything ran into a sort of vertigo. With an effort she recovered herself, pulled herself together, needle in hand, and embroidered straight along, with her accustomed application, in a dream. Perhaps some terrible malady was lurking within her. One evening, on going to bed, she was taken with a chill and thought that she would not recover. Her heart beat as if it would burst, her ears were filled as with the hum of a bell. Was she in love, or was she going to die? And she smiled peacefully at Hubertine, who, while waxing her thread, was uneasily examining her.

But Angélique had taken an oath never again to see Félicien. She no longer ventured among the wild grass of the Clos-Marie and no longer even visited her poor. She was afraid lest something frightful might happen on the day when they should again meet face to face. In addition an idea of penance entered into her resolution, in order to punish herself for the sin she might have committed. Hence, on mornings of rigidity, she condemned herself not to cast a single glance out of the window from fear of seeing the man she dreaded on the borders of the Chevrotte. And if, tempted, she looked and he was not there, she was very sad because of it until the next day.

One morning, Hubert was arranging a dalmatic, when a ring at the door-bell summoned him down-stairs. It was probably a customer, some order without doubt, for Hubertine and Angélique heard the hum of voices through the stairway door, which had been left open. Then, they raised their heads, greatly surprised: footsteps were ascending, the embroiderer was bringing up the customer, a thing that had never occurred before. And the young girl was astounded on recognizing Félicien. He was plainly clad, like an unengaged art workman. Since she no longer came to him, he had come to her, after days of vain waiting and anxious uncertainty, passed in saying to himself that she did not love him.

“See, my child, here is something that concerns you,” explained Hubert. “Monsieur wishes to give us an order for an exceptional piece of work. And, ma foi, to talk about it tranquilly, I have preferred to receive him

here. It is to my daughter, monsieur, that you will have to show your design."

Neither he nor Hubertine had the slightest suspicion. They approached simply with curiosity, to see. But Félicien was, like Angélique, choked with emotion. His hands trembled when he unrolled the design; and he was forced to speak slowly, in order to hide the shakiness of his voice.

"It is a mitre for Monseigneur. Yes, some ladies living in the town, who wish to make him a present, have charged me with designing the pieces and with superintending the execution. I am a painter on glass, but I occupy myself a great deal also with ancient art. You see that I have only reconstructed a Gothic mitre."

Angélique, bent over the huge sheet, which he had placed before her, uttered a faint exclamation.

"Oh! Saint Agnes!"

It was, indeed, the martyr of thirteen, the virgin clad in her hair, from whence emerged only her little feet and her little hands, such as she was upon her pillar at one of the doors of the cathedral, such especially as she was found in the interior, in the shape of an old wooden statue, formerly painted, now of a light yellow, gilded all over by age. She occupied the entire face of the mitre, in a standing posture, borne towards the sky by two angels; and, below her, a very distant and very faint landscape spread out. The back and the lappets were enriched with lanceolated ornaments of a handsome style.

"The ladies," resumed Félicien, "will make the present for the procession of the Miracle, and I naturally thought it suitable to select Saint Agnes."

"The idea is excellent," interrupted Hubert.

Hubertine said, in her turn:

"Monseigneur will be greatly touched."

The procession of the Miracle, which took place annually on the 28th of July, dated from Jean V. of Hauteceur, and was made in gratitude for the miraculous power of curing, which God had sent to him and his race to save Beaumont from the plague. The legend related that the Hauteceurs owed this power to the intervention of Saint Agnes, to whom they were strongly devoted; and hence the ancient custom, on the date of the anniversary, of taking out the old statue of the saint, which was drawn solemnly through the streets of the town in the pious belief that she continued to thrust all ills aside from it.

"For the procession of the Miracle," at last murmured Angélique, her eyes upon the design, "but it takes place in twenty days, we shall not have sufficient time."

The Huberts tossed their heads. In fact, such a work demanded infinite care. Hubertine, however, turned towards the young girl.

"I could aid you, I would charge myself with the ornaments and you would only have to make the figure."

Angélique in her trouble was still examining the saint. No, no!—she refused, she defended herself against the kindness of accepting. It would be very bad to be an accomplice; for, surely, Félicien lied, she felt certain that he was not poor, that he was hiding himself beneath that workman's garb; and that assumed simplicity, all that tale in order to penetrate to her, put

her on her guard, amused and happy at bottom, transfiguring him, seeing the prince royal that he must be, in the absolute certitude in which she lived of the entire realization of her dream.

"No," repeated she, in a low tone, "we would not have sufficient time."

And, without lifting her eyes, she continued, as if talking to herself:

"For the saint one can use neither passé nor guipure. That would be unworthy. Embroidery in shaded gold is required."

"I was just thinking of that style of embroidery," said Félicien. "I knew that mademoiselle had rediscovered the secret of it. A very beautiful fragment of it is still to be seen in the sacristy."

Hubert grew excited.

"Yes, yes, it is of the Fifteenth Century, it was embroidered by one of my great-grandmothers. In shaded gold, ah! there never was more beautiful work, monsieur! But it demanded too much time, it cost too much and, besides, it exacted genuine artists. That work has not been made for two hundred years. And, if my daughter refuses, you may give it up, for she alone to-day is capable of undertaking it. I know of no other having the necessary finesse of eye and hand."

Hubertine, since mention had been made of shaded gold, had grown deferential. She added, in a tone of conviction:

"It is, indeed, impossible to do the work in twenty days. The patience of a fairy is required."

But, through looking fixedly at the saint, Angélique

had just made a discovery which overwhelmed her heart with joy. Agnes resembled herself. In sketching the antique statue, Félicien certainly had had her in his mind; and this thought that she was thus always present, that he saw her everywhere, softened her resolution to send him away. At last she raised her forehead and saw him trembling, his eyes moistened with a supplication so ardent that she was vanquished. But through that mischief, that natural science which comes to girls, even when they are ignorant of everything, she did not wish to have the air of consenting.

"It is impossible," repeated she, handing back the design. "I would not do it for any one."

Félicien had a look of veritable despair. It was he whom she refused, he thought he understood that. As he turned to go, he said to Hubert:

"As to the money, all that you demanded would have been paid. The ladies would give as much as two thousand francs."

Certainly, the family were not mercenary. And yet that large sum excited them. How vexatious it was to let an order so advantageous slip through their fingers!

"Two thousand francs," resumed Angélique, in her soft voice, "two thousand francs, monsieur."

And she, for whom money did not count, repressed a smile, a teasing smile, which scarcely pinched the corners of her mouth, delighted at not appearing to yield to the pleasure of seeing him and at giving him a false opinion of her.

"Oh! two thousand francs, monsieur, in that case I accept. I would not do it for any one had it not been

decided to pay so much. If it is necessary, I will work at night."

Hubert and Hubertine then wished to refuse, in their turn, fearing lest she might fatigue herself too much.

"No, no, one cannot send away the money that comes to one. Count on me. Your mitre will be ready the day before the procession."

Félicien left the design and withdrew, filled with sorrow, without finding the courage to give new instructions in order to prolong his stay. She certainly did not love him, she had affected not to recognize him and to treat him like an ordinary customer, whose money only is wanted. At first, he was enraged and accused her of having a mean soul. So much the better! it was over, he would never think of her again. Then, as he was still thinking over the matter, he finished by excusing her: did she not live by her work, ought she not to earn her bread? Two days later, he was very unhappy and resumed roving about, sick from not seeing her. She no longer came out, she did not even appear at the windows. And he had come to say to himself that, if she did not love him, if she loved only gain, he loved her more every day, as one loves the loved one at twenty years of age, without reason, at the hazard of the heart, for the joy and the pain of loving. One evening, he saw her and that was the end of it: now, it was she and not another; whatever she might be, bad or good, ugly or pretty, poor or rich, he would die if he did not win her. On the third day his suffering became such that, despite his oath to forget her, he returned to the dwelling of the Huberts.

Down-stairs, when he had rung, he was again received by the embroiderer, who, in view of the obscurity of his explanations, decided to take him to the workroom once more.

"My daughter, monsieur desires to explain to you some things that I cannot very well understand."

"If it is not too much trouble to mademoiselle, I would like to see how matters are getting along. The ladies have directed me to follow the work in person, that is, however, provided that I do not put out——"

Angélique, on seeing him appear, had felt her heart beat violently, even in her throat. It was choking her. But she quieted it with an effort; the blood did not even mount to her cheeks; and it was very calmly, with an air of indifference, that she replied:

"Oh! nothing puts me out, monsieur. I work quite as well before anybody. The design is yours, it is natural that you should follow the execution."

Discountenanced, Félicien would not have dared to sit down, without the invitation of Hubertine, who smiled with her grave smile upon this excellent customer. Immediately she resumed work, bent over the frame, where she was embroidering in guipure the Gothic ornaments of the back of the mitre. On his side, Hubert took down from the wall a glued and finished banner, which had been drying there for two days and which he wished to take from the frame. Nothing further was said, the two women and the man worked as if no stranger had been present.

And the young man calmed himself somewhat in the midst of that great peace. Three o'clock struck, the

shadow of the cathedral had already lengthened and a dim half-light was entering through the wide-open window. It was the twilight time, which commenced at noon for the little house, cool and green at the foot of the colossus. A slight clatter of shoes was heard upon the marble slabs, made by a lot of boarding-school girls who were being taken to confession. In the workroom, the old implements, the old walls, everything that remained there unchangeable, seemed to be sleeping the sleep of centuries; and from them also came a great deal of coolness and calmness. A huge square of white light, equal and pure, fell upon the frame over which bent the embroiderers, with their delicate profiles, in the yellow reflection of the gold.

"Mademoiselle, I wished to say to you," commenced Félicien, in embarrassment, feeling that he ought to assign some motive for his coming, "I wished to say to you that, for the hair, gold seemed to me preferable to silk."

She had raised her head. The laughter in her eyes signified clearly that he need not have taken the trouble to come if he had no other recommendation to make. And she bent over again, answering in a slightly mocking voice:

"Without doubt, monsieur!"

He felt very silly, he noticed then only that she was at that moment working on the hair. Before her was the design which he had made, but washed in water colors, set off with gold, of the softness of tone of an ancient miniature, faded in a book of hours. And she was copying that picture with the patience and address

of an artist painting with the magnifying-glass. After having reproduced it somewhat roughly upon white satin, firmly stretched and lined with thick cloth, she had covered the satin with threads of gold directed from bottom to top, fastened simply at the two ends, free and touching each other. Then, employing those threads as a woof, she separated them with the point of her needle to rejoin beneath the design, she followed that design, sewed the threads of gold with cross-stitches of silk, which she assorted in accordance with the shading of the model. In the dark portions the silk completely hid the gold; in the half-tints the stitches of silk were spaced more and more; and the lights were made of gold alone, left uncovered. It was the shaded gold, the background of gold which the needle shaded with silk, a picture of melted colors, as if warmed underneath by a glory, of a mystic brightness.

“Ah!” suddenly said Hubert, who had commenced to slacken the banner by winding upon his fingers the twine of the frame, “the masterwork of an embroiderer formerly was shaded gold. She ought to make, as it is written in the statutes, ‘a single image which is of shaded gold, of a half-third in height.’ You would have been received, Angélique.”

And again there was silence. For the hair, departing from the rule, Angélique had conceived the same idea as Félicien: that of not employing silk, of covering gold with gold; and she was manœuvring ten needlesful of gold thread of different tones, from the dark red gold of expiring braziers to the pale yellow gold of the autumn forests. Agnes, from neck to ankles, was thus clad with

a stream of golden locks. The flood started from the nape of the neck, covered the back with a thick mantle, overflowed in front, above the shoulders, in two waves, which, rejoining beneath the chin, flowed down to the feet. It was a miraculous growth of hair, a fabulous fleece with enormous curls, a warm and living robe, perfumed with purity.

That day, Félicien could only look at Angélique embroidering the curls with cleft stitches in the direction of their roll; and he did not tire of seeing the locks grow and flame beneath her needle. Their depth and the great quiver which unrolled them at a stroke disturbed him. Hubertine, who was sewing on spangles, concealing the thread of each one with a little twist, turned from time to time and enveloped him with her calm gaze when she threw an imperfect spangle into the waste-basket. Hubert, who had withdrawn the laths to rip the banner from the cylinders, had finished carefully folding it. And Félicien, whose embarrassment was augmented by the silence, at last comprehended that he ought to have the wisdom to depart, since he could not recall any of the observations which he had promised himself to make.

He arose and stammered :

"I will return. I have so badly reproduced the charming design of the head that you will, perhaps, stand in need of some explanations from me."

Angélique tranquilly turned her large bright eyes on his.

"No, no. But return, monsieur, return, if you are uneasy about the execution."

He went away, delighted with the permission but grieved by that coldness. She did not love him, she would never love him, that was settled. What was the good of returning then? And the next day and the succeeding days, he returned to the cool house on the Rue des Orfèvres. The hours which he did not spend there were abominable, ravaged by his internal struggle, tortured by uncertainty. He succeeded in calming himself only when near the embroiderer, even resigned to not pleasing her, consoled for everything provided that she was present. Every morning he arrived, spoke of the work and seated himself before the frame as if his presence had been necessary; and it enchanted him to find again her motionless profile, bathed with the blonde brightness of her hair, and to follow the agile play of her supple little hands, disentangling themselves amid the long needlesful. She was very simple and she now treated him as a comrade. Nevertheless, he felt always between them things which she did not say and which filled his heart with anguish. She sometimes raised her head, with an air of mockery, her eyes impatient and interrogative. Then, seeing that he grew frightened, she again became very cold.

But Félicien had discovered a means of exciting her and he abused it. It was to speak to her of her art, of the ancient masterpieces of embroidery which he had seen, preserved in the treasure-chambers of cathedrals, or engraved in books, superb copes, the cope of Charlemagne, in red silk, with huge eagles with wings outspread, the cope of Sion, decorated with a whole people of holy figures; a dalmatic which passes for the most

beautiful piece known, the imperial dalmatic, on which is celebrated the glory of Jesus Christ on earth and in Heaven, the Transfiguration, the Last Judgment, the numerous personages of which are embroidered in shaded silks, gold and silver; a Tree of Jesse also, an orfroi of silk upon satin, which seems detached from a stained glass window of the Fifteenth Century, Abraham below, David, Solomon and the Virgin Mary, then Jesus above; and admirable chasubles, the chasuble of such great simplicity, Christ on the cross, bleeding, splashed with red silk upon cloth of gold, having at his feet the Virgin sustained by Saint John, the chasuble of Naintré finally, on which one sees Mary, seated in majesty, with sandals on her feet, holding the naked Infant upon her knees. Others, other marvels filed away, venerable from their great age, of a faith, of a simplicity in magnificence, lost in our day, preserving from the tabernacles the odor of incense and the mystic gleam of faded gold.

“Ah!” sighed Angélique, “those beautiful things are done with. One cannot even find the tones again.”

And, with sparkling eyes, she stopped working when he related to her the histories of the great male and female embroiderers of the past, Simonne de Gaules, Colin Jolye, whose names have traversed the ages. Then, plying her needle anew, she remained transfigured by them and kept upon her face the radiance of her passion as an artist. Never had she seemed to him more beautiful, so enthusiastic, so virginal, burning with a pure flame amid the brilliancy of the gold and the silk, with her profound application, her work of precision, the little stitches into

which she threw her whole soul. He ceased to speak and contemplated her until, aroused by the silence, she noticed the excitement into which he had thrown her. She was confused by this as by a defeat, but she recovered her indifferent calmness and cried out, in an angry voice :

“ There ! my silks are tangled again ! Mother, don’t stir ! ”

Hubertine, who had not moved, smiled tranquilly. She had at first been uneasy about the young man’s assiduities, she had talked over the matter one evening with Hubert as they were going to bed. But the youth did not displease them, they remained very agreeable : why should they oppose interviews which might bring about Angélique’s happiness ? She, therefore, let matters take their own course, while she kept a watch with her sage air. Besides, for several weeks, she herself had had a sad heart because of the vain tendernesses of her husband. It was the month in which they had lost their infant ; and every year, at that date, brought back to them the same regrets, the same desires, he trembling to his feet, burning to believe himself pardoned at last, she loving and grieved, giving herself wholly, despairing of bending fate. They did not speak of this, they did not exchange a kiss more on account of it, before people ; but this redoubling of love emerged from the silence of their chamber, came from their persons at the slightest gesture, by the way in which their glances met and forgot themselves for a second one within the other. And this was like a grave accompaniment.

A week passed and the work on the mitre was advan-

cing. These daily interviews had acquired a great familiar sweetness.

"The forehead very high, eh, without trace of eyebrows?"

"Yes, very high, and not a shadow, as in the miniatures of the time."

"Pass me the white silk."

"Wait, I will unwind it."

He aided her, and this working together had a calming effect. It brought them within the sphere of everyday reality. Though not a word of love was uttered, though not even a voluntary grazing brought their fingers in contact, the bond was tightening hourly.

"Father, what are you doing? We no longer hear you."

She turned and saw the embroiderer, his hands occupied with charging a rod, his eyes fixed upon his wife.

"I am giving gold to your mother."

And, from the bringing of the rod, from Hubertine's mute expression of thankfulness, from Hubert's continual officiousness around her, the warm breath of a caress disengaged itself and enveloped Angélique and Félicien, bent anew over the frame. The workroom itself, the antique apartment with its old implements, its peace of another age, was an accomplice. It seemed so far from the street, drawn back into the depths of a dream, in that land of good souls where prodigy reigns, the easy realization of every joy.

In five days the mitre was to be delivered; and Angélique, certain of having it finished, of even being twenty-four hours ahead of time, breathed, astonished to find

Félicien so near her, his elbows leaned on the trestle. So they were comrades, eh? She no longer defended herself against what she felt to be conquering in him, she no longer smiled mischievously at all he hid and she guessed. What had put her to sleep in her uneasy waiting? And the eternal question returned, the question she put to herself every evening on retiring: did she love him? For hours, in the depths of her huge bed, she had turned over the words, seeking for meanings which had escaped her. Suddenly, that night, she felt her heart give way and burst into tears, her face buried in the pillow so that she might not be heard. She loved him, she loved him to the point of dying of it. Why?—how? She did not know, she never would know anything about it; but she loved him, her whole being cried out that she loved him. Light had come, love had shone forth like the light of the sun. She wept for a long while, full of unutterable confusion and happiness, again seized with regret that she had not confided in Hubertine. Her secret was stifling her and she took a solemn oath that she would again become ice for Félicien and that she would suffer everything rather than let him see her tenderness. To love him, to love him in silence, that was the punishment, the trial which should redeem her fault. She suffered deliciously because of this, she thought of the martyrs of the Legend, it seemed to her that she had become in some degree their sister by flagellating herself thus and that her guardian, Agnes, was gazing at her with her sad and gentle eyes.

The next day Angélique finished the mitre. She had

embroidered with split silk, lighter in weight than the threads of the Virgin, the little hands and the little feet, the only corners of white flesh which emerged from the royal hair of gold. She finished the face with the delicacy of a lily, in which the gold appeared like the blood of the veins beneath the epidermis of silks. And that face of sunlight was mounting to the horizon from the blue plain, borne away by the two angels.

When Félicien entered, he uttered a cry of admiration.

“Oh! she resembles you!”

It was an involuntary confession, the admission of that resemblance which he had put into the design. He realized that he had betrayed himself and grew very red.

“It’s true, little daughter, she has your pretty eyes,” said Hubert, who had approached.

Hubertine contented herself with smiling, having long since noticed the fact; and she appeared surprised, saddened even, when she heard Angélique reply, in her old voice of the evil days:

“My pretty eyes! Are you mocking me? I am ugly—I know myself well!”

Then, rising and shaking herself, overdoing her rôle of a mercenary and cold girl:

“Ah! so it’s done! I have had enough of it. A mighty weight is off my shoulders! Do you know that I would not undertake it again for the same price?”

Félicien was thunderstruck as he listened to her. What! money again? He had thought her for a moment so tender, so fond of her art! Had he then deceived himself that he again found her sensible only to

the idea of profit, indifferent to the point of rejoicing that she had finished her work and would see it no more? For some days he had been in despair and had sought vainly under what pretext he could return. And she did not love him, and she would never love him! Such suffering had wrung his heart so much that his eyes grew pale.

"Mademoiselle, are you not going to mount the mitre?"

"No, mother will do that much better. I am too well satisfied at not having to touch it any more!"

"Then, you do not love your work?"

"I! I love nothing!"

Hubertine was compelled to check her sternly. And she begged Félicien to excuse that nervous child, she told him that early on the morrow the mitre would be at his disposal. It was a dismissal, but he did not go, he looked at the old workroom, full of shade and peace, as if he were about being driven from paradise. He had experienced there the illusion of such delicious hours, he felt so sadly that his heart remained there, torn out! What tortured him was his inability to explain himself, the frightful uncertainty he would bear away with him. At last, he was forced to depart.

Scarcely had the door closed behind him when Hubert demanded:

"What is the matter with you, my child? Are you ill?"

"Oh! no, that young man wearied me! I don't want to see him again!"

And Hubertine said then:

“Very good, you will not see him again. Only, nothing prevents being polite.”

Angélique, under a pretext, had but time to ascend to her chamber. There, she burst into tears. Ah! how happy she was and how she suffered! Her poor dear love, how sad he must have been when he went away! But it was sworn to the saints, she would love him to the point of dying and never would he know it!

CHAPTER VII.

IN ANGÉLIQUE'S CHAMBER.

THE evening of the same day, immediately on quitting table, Angélique complained of feeling quite ill and went up again to her chamber. Her emotions of the morning and her struggles against herself had been too much for her. She went to bed at once and again burst into tears, her head plunged beneath the sheet, with the desperate need of disappearing and being no more.

The hours passed and night came on, a glowing July night, the heavy calm of which entered through the window, left wide open. In the dark sky shone a swarm of stars. It must have been nearly eleven o'clock; the moon would not rise until towards midnight; it was in its last quarter and had already diminished.

And, in the sombre chamber, Angélique was still shedding an inexhaustible flood of tears, when a creaking sound at her door caused her to raise her head.

There was silence, then, a voice called to her, tenderly :

"Angélique—Angélique—my dear."

She recognized the voice as Hubertine's. Without doubt, the latter, on retiring with her husband, had heard the distant sound of sobs; and, uneasy, half-undressed, she had come up-stairs to see what was the matter.

"Angélique, are you ill? "

Holding her breath, the young girl did not answer. She felt only an immense desire for solitude, the sole relief for her malady. A consolation, a caress, even from her mother, would have hurt her. She pictured her on the other side of the door, and divined that she was barefooted from the softness of the pattering on the floor. Two minutes went by, and she felt that she was yet there, bent down, with her ear against the wood, holding her loosened garments over her with her handsome arms.

Hubertine, no longer hearing anything, not even a breath, was afraid to call again. She was very certain that she had heard groans; but, if the child had finally fallen asleep, what was the good of awaking her? She waited a minute longer, troubled by that grief which her daughter was hiding from her, guessing confusedly, filled herself with a great tender emotion. And she decided to go down-stairs again as she had come up, her hands familiar with the slightest turns, without leaving any other sound behind her, in the dark house, than the soft patter of her bare feet.

Then, it was Angélique who listened, sitting up in the middle of her bed. The silence was so absolute that she distinguished the soft pressure of the heels on the edge of every step. Below, the door of the chamber opened, closed again; then, she seized a barely distinct murmur, an affectionate and sad whispering, what her parents were saying about her, doubtless, their fears, their wishes; and this did not cease, although they must have gone to bed, after having put out the light. Never had the nocturnal sounds of the old house come up to her in

this way. Usually, she slept the heavy sleep of youth and did not even hear the furniture crack; while, in the insomnia of her resisted passion, it seemed to her that the entire mansion loved and was lamenting. Were not the Huberts also stifling tears, a world of dismayed and grieved tenderness at being childless? She did not know, she merely had the sensation, in the warm night, below her, of that vigil of the man and wife, a great love, a great trouble, the long and chaste confidence of affection ever fresh.

And while she was seated, listening to the quivering and sighing house, Angélique could not contain herself, her tears were still flowing; but, at present, they gushed mutely, warm and rapid, like the blood of her veins. A single question, since morning, had been turning within her, had wounded her in all her being: had she been right in filling Félicien with despair, in sending him off thus, with the thought that she did not love him plunged in his heart like a knife? She loved him, and she had caused him that suffering, and she herself was suffering frightfully because of it. Why so much pain?—did the saints demand tears?—would it have angered Agnes to know that she was happy? A doubt was now rending her. In the past, when she was awaiting the one who should come, she had arranged matters better: he would enter, she would recognize him, and they would go away forever together. And he had come, and they were both sobbing, forever separated. What was the good?—what had produced it?—who had exacted from her that oath to love him without telling him?

But, above all, the fear of being the guilty one, of having been wicked, grieved Angélique. Perhaps the bad girl had again sprung up. Astonished, she recalled her affectation of indifference, the mocking way in which she had received Félicien, the mischievous pleasure she had taken in giving him a false idea of herself. Her tears redoubled and her heart melted with an immense, infinite pity for the suffering she had thus caused, without wishing it. She constantly saw him going away, she had present with her the consternation of his visage, his troubled eyes, his trembling lips; and she followed him in the streets, to his home, pale, mortally wounded by her, losing his blood drop by drop. Where was he at that hour?—was he not quivering with fever? She wrung her hands in anguish at the idea of not knowing how to repair the evil. Ah! the thought of causing suffering revolted her! She would have liked to be good immediately, to create happiness about her.

It would soon be midnight, the tall elms of the bishop's house were hiding the moon at the horizon, and the chamber remained dark. Then, her head having fallen back upon the pillow, Angélique no longer thought, strove to go to sleep; but she could not, her tears continued to flow from her closed eyelids. And thought returned, she remembered the violets which, for fifteen days past, she had found on going up to bed, upon the balcony, in front of her window. Every evening, it was a bouquet of violets. Félicien certainly had thrown it from the Clos-Marie, for she recollected having told him that violets alone, by a singular virtue, calmed her,

when the perfume of other flowers, on the contrary, tormented her with terrible headaches; and he had thus sent her sweet nights, a world of balmly sleep, refreshed by good dreams. That evening, she had placed the bouquet on her bolster. Suddenly, the happy idea of getting it came to her, she laid it beside her, beside her cheek, and gradually calmed herself by smelling it. The violets finally stopped her tears. She still did not go to sleep, she remained with her eyes closed, bathed by that perfume which came from him, delighted to repose and wait, in a confident abandon of all her being.

But a great shiver passed through her. Midnight struck, she opened her eyelids and was amazed to find her chamber filled with a brilliant light. Above the elms, the moon was slowly ascending, extinguishing the stars in the paled sky. Through the window she perceived the arch of the cathedral, very white. And it seemed that this was the reflection of that whiteness which brightened her chamber, a light of dawn, milky and cool. The white walls, the white joists, all that white nudity, in fact, was increased by it, extended and drawn back as in a dream. She, however, recognized the old furniture of sombre oak, the cupboard, the chest, the chairs, with the gleaming angles of their carving. Her bed alone, her square bed, of a royal amplitude, astonished her, as if she had never seen it before, sending up its posts, bearing its canopy of old pink chintz, bathed with such a thick sheet of moonlight that she believed herself upon a cloud, in the open sky, uplifted by a flock of mute and invisible wings. For an instant she felt the vast swaying of it; then, her eyes grew ac-

customed to the scene, her bed was in the usual corner, she lay with motionless head, her glances wandering, amid that lake of rays, the bouquet of violets pressed to her lips.

What was she waiting for—why could she not sleep? She was certain now that she was waiting for some one. If she had ceased to weep, it was because he was coming. That consoling brightness, which had put to flight the gloom of evil dreams, announced him. He was coming, the messenger moonlight had entered before him but to illuminate them with that whiteness of dawn. The chamber was hung with white velvet, they would be able to see each other. Then, she arose and dressed herself: simply put on a white dress, the muslin dress she had worn on the day of the walk to the ruins of Hauteceœur. She did not even bind up her hair which clad her shoulders. Her feet remained bare in her slippers. And she waited.

At present, Angélique did not know how he would arrive. Without doubt, he would not be able to climb up and they would see each other, she leaning upon the balcony rail, he below in the Clos-Marie. Nevertheless, she had seated herself, as if she had comprehended the inutility of going to the window. Why should he not pass through the walls, like the saints of the Legend? She waited. But she was not alone in her waiting, she felt that the virgins, whose white host had enveloped her since her childhood, were all about her. They had entered with the ray of moonlight, they had come from the tall, mysterious trees of the bishop's house, with blue tops, from hidden nooks of the cathedral, entangled in

its forest of stones. From all the known and beloved horizon, from the Chevrotte, from the willows, from the grass, the young girl heard her dreams coming back to her, the hopes, the desires, that portion of herself which she had put in things from seeing them daily and which things were returning to her. Never had the voices of the invisible spoken so loudly, she heard the beyond, she recognized, in the depths of the burning night, without a breath of air, the slight flutter which was for her the rustling of the robe of Agnes, when the guardian of her body was beside her. She was delighted to know that Agnes was there, with the others. And she waited.

More time passed, but Angélique was not sensible of it. It appeared natural to her when Félicien arrived, climbing over the balustrade of the balcony. His tall stature stood out against the white sky. He did not enter, he remained in the luminous frame of the window.

“Have no fear! It is I—I have come!”

She had no fear, she simply thought him punctual.

“You climbed up the woodwork, did you not?”

“Yes, up the woodwork.”

This method was so easy that it made her laugh. He had first hoisted himself upon the projecting roof of the door; then, from there, climbing along the corbel, the foot of which was supported by the cornice of the ground-floor, he had reached the balcony without difficulty.

“I was waiting for you, come to me!”

Félicien, who had arrived, violent, full of wild resolutions, did not stir, stunned by this sudden felicity. And Angélique now was certain that the saints did not forbid her to love, for she had heard them welcome him with

her with a laugh of affection as light as a breath of the night. Where had she acquired the foolish thought that Agnes would be angered? At her side, Agnes was radiant with a joy which she felt descend upon her shoulders and envelop her, like the caress of two great wings. All those who had died of love showed themselves compassionate for the pains of innocence and returned to wander about on warm nights only to watch, invisible, over their tearful tenderness.

“Come to me, I was waiting for you!”

Then, staggering, Félicien entered. He had said to himself that he wanted her, that he would hug her to suffocation in his arms, despite her cries. But on seeing her so gentle, on penetrating into her chamber all white and so pure, he had again become purer and weaker than a child.

He took three steps. But he quivered and fell upon both knees, far away from her.

“If you only knew what abominable torture I have undergone! I have never before suffered thus, the only grief in the world is not to believe one’s self beloved! I would lose everything, be an outcast, dying of hunger, tossed by sickness. But I would not pass another day with the devouring misery in my heart of saying to myself that you do not love me! Be kind and spare me!”

She listened to him mutely, overwhelmed with pity, but, nevertheless, very happy.

“How you let me go away this morning! I had imagined that you had grown better, that you had understood. And I found you again the same as on the

first day, indifferent, treating me like a mere passing customer, roughly recalling me to the low questions of life. On the stairway, I stumbled. Without, I ran, I was afraid of bursting into tears. Then, at the moment of ascending to my room, it seemed to me that I would stifle if I shut myself up. Then, I escaped into the open country, I walked as chance directed, took one road, took another. When night came on, I was still walking. But my torment galloped as rapidly and was devouring me. When one loves, one cannot flee the pain of his love. See, it was there, in my heart, that you had planted the knife, and the point was constantly sinking deeper."

He gave a long groan at the keen remembrance of his torture.

"I remained for hours in the grass, prostrated by my misfortune, like a tree torn up by the roots. And, besides, nothing existed, there was only you. The thought that I would not have you was killing me. Already, my feet were growing numb, madness was taking possession of my brain. And that is why I returned. I know not through what I passed, how I was able to reach your chamber. Forgive me, but I would have broken in the doors with my fists, I would have hoisted myself to your window in broad day."

She was in the shadow. He, upon his knees beneath the moonlight, did not see that she was very pale with repentant tenderness, so moved that she could not speak. He thought her untouched, he clasped his hands.

"This dates from a long while back. It was one evening that I saw you here, at that window. You

were only a vague whiteness, I could scarcely distinguish your visage, and yet I saw you, I divined you such as you are. But I was very much afraid, I roved about for nights without finding the courage to meet you in broad day. And, besides, you pleased me in that mystery, my happiness was to dream of you as of an unknown whom I would never know. Later, I discovered whom you were, one cannot resist that need of knowing, of possessing his dream. It was then that my fever began. It has grown with each meeting. You remember the first time, in that field, the morning when I was examining the stained glass window. Never had I felt myself so awkward, you had abundant reason to laugh at me. And I frightened you afterwards. I continued to be maladroit in following you to the houses of your poor. Already I had ceased to be the master of my will. I did things, astonished and afraid to do them. When I presented myself to order that mitre, it was some power which pushed me, for of myself I did not dare, I was certain of displeasing you. If you could only comprehend how wretched I am! Do not love me, but let me love you. Be cold, be wicked, I will love you as you may be. I ask of you only to see you, without any hope, solely for the joy of being thus, at your knees!"

He stopped, weakening, losing courage in the belief that he had found nothing to touch her. And he did not see that she was smiling, with an invincible smile, gradually growing upon her lips. Ah! the dear fellow, he was so innocent and so credulous, he had recited there his prayer from a heart wholly fresh and passion-

ate, in adoration before her, as before the very dream of his youth ! To think that she had struggled at first never to see him again, then that she had sworn to love him without ever letting him know it ! A great silence had fallen, the saints did not forbid to love when one loved thus. Behind her back, a burst of gayety had run, scarcely a quiver, the moving wave of the moonlight upon the floor of the chamber. An invisible finger, without doubt that of her guardian, had placed itself upon her mouth as if to release her from her oath. She could speak henceforth, all that was powerful and tender floating about her breathed words to her.

“Ah ! yes, I remember, I remember.”

Félicien was immediately captivated by the music of that voice, the charm of which was so strong upon him that his love was augmented merely by hearing it.

“Yes, I remember, when you came in the night. You were so far away, the first evenings, that the slight sound of your footsteps left me uncertain. Afterwards, I recognized you, and later I saw your shadow, and one evening finally you showed yourself, a beautiful night like this, in the full white light. You emerged slowly from things, such as I had expected you for years. I remember the great laughter that I was stifling and that burst forth in spite of me when you rescued that piece of linen that had been borne away by the Chevrotte. I remember my anger when you robbed me of my poor by giving them so much money that I had the air of being miserly. I remember my fear the evening when you forced me to run so rapidly, barefooted in the grass. Yes, I remember, I remember.”

Her voice of pure crystal had been troubled a little, in the quiver of this last recollection she had evoked, as if the "I love you!" had again passed over her face. And he listened to her with delight.

"I have been wicked, that's very true. One is so foolish when one does not know! One does things which one believes necessary, one is afraid of being in fault as soon as one obeys one's heart. But what remorse I had afterwards, how I suffered from your suffering! If I wished to explain that, I could not, without doubt. When you came with your design of Saint Agnes, I was enchanted to work for you, I suspected that you would return every day. And, see, I affected indifference, as if I had undertaken the task of driving you from the house. One has then the need of rendering one's self unhappy? While I would have liked to receive you with open hands, there was, in the depths of my being, another woman who revolted, who was afraid and distrustful of you, who delighted to torture you with uncertainty, in the vague idea of a quarrel to exhaust, the very old cause of which she had forgotten. I am not always good, things spring up in me of which I am ignorant. And the worst certainly is that I spoke to you of money. Ah! money, I who have never thought of it, who would accept wagon loads of it only for the joy of showering it down where I wished! What mischievous amusement could I have taken in thus calumniating myself? Will you forgive me?"

Félicien was at her feet. He had dragged himself to her on his knees. It was unhopèd for and without bounds.

He murmured :

"Ah ! dear soul, inestimable, and beautiful, and kind, of the kindness of prodigy which has cured me with a breath ! I know no longer if I have suffered. And it is for you to forgive me, for I have a confession to make to you, I must tell you who I am."

A great trouble had again taken possession of him at the idea that he could not conceal himself further, when she had confided so frankly in him. That would be disloyal. He hesitated, nevertheless, in the fear of losing her, if she should grow uneasy about the future on knowing him at last. And she waited for him to speak, again mischievous, in spite of herself.

In a very low voice, he continued :

"I lied to your parents."

"Yes, I know," said she, smiling.

"No, you do not know, you cannot know, it is too far away. I paint on glass only for my pleasure, it is necessary that you should learn——"

Then, with a prompt movement, she put her hand over his mouth, she stopped the confidance.

"I don't wish to know. I awaited you and you have come. That is enough."

He did not speak, that little hand over his lips stifled him with happiness.

"I will know later, when it shall be time. Besides, I assure you that I know. You can be only the handsomest, the richest and the noblest, for such is my dream. I shall wait very tranquilly, for I am certain that it will be accomplished. You are he whom I hoped for, and I am yours !"

A second time she interrupted herself, in the quivering of the words which she uttered. She had not found them herself alone, they had come to her from the beautiful night, from the great white sky, from the old trees and the old stones, asleep without, dreaming aloud their dreams; and voices behind her had murmured them also, the voices of her friends of the Legend, with whom the air was peopled. But a word remained to be said, the one in which everything else was to melt, the distant waiting, the slow creation of the lover, the augmented fever of the first meetings. It escaped, with the white flight of an early bird mounting to the light, in the virgin whiteness of the chamber.

“I love you!”

Angélique, with both hands open, slipped upon her knees, gave herself and Félicien recalled the evening when she had run barefooted in the grass, so adorable that he had pursued her to stammer in her ear: “I love you!” And she well understood that she had only replied to him at that moment with the same cry: “I love you!” The eternal cry come at last from her wide open heart.

“I love you! Take me, bear me away, I belong to you!”

She gave herself, in a gift of all her person. It was a hereditary flame rekindled within her. Her groping hands grasped emptiness, her too heavy head bent back upon the delicate nape of her neck. If he had extended his arms, she would have fallen into them, ignoring everything, yielding to the pressure of her veins, having only the need of melting into him. And it was he, come to take her, who trembled before that

innocence so passionate. He held her gently by the wrists, he recrossed her chaste hands upon her bosom. For an instant, he looked at her, without even yielding to the temptation of kissing her hair.

"You love me and I love you! Ah! the certainty of being loved!"

But an anxiety drew them from this ecstatic state. What was that?—they saw each other in a great white light, it seemed to them that the brightness of the moon had increased, shone like that of a sun. It was the dawn, a cloud turned purple above the elms of the bishop's house. Eh! what?—already day! They were confounded by this, they could not believe that for hours they had been there, talking. She had said nothing to him yet and he had so many other things to say!

"A minute, only a minute!"

The dawn, smilingly, increased, the dawn already warm with a hot day of summer. One by one, the stars were extinguished, and with them departed the wandering visions, the invisible friends, reascended in a ray of moonlight. Now, beneath the full light of day, the chamber was no longer white save with the whiteness of its walls and its beams, all empty with its antique furniture of sombre oak. They saw the disturbed bed, which one of the chintz curtains, fallen down, half-concealed.

"A minute, a minute more!"

Angélique had arisen, refusing, pressing Félicien to go. Since the day had been growing she had been filled with confusion, and the sight of the bed capped the climax. On her right, she had believed she heard a slight sound,

while her hair had been stirred although not a breath of wind had entered. Was it not Agnes, who was the last to depart, driven away by the sun?

"No, leave me. It is so light now that I am afraid!"

Then, Félicien, obeying, withdrew. To be loved went beyond his desire. At the window he turned and again gazed at her for a long while, as if he wished to carry away something of her. Both of them smiled, bathed with the dawn, in that prolonged caress of their look.

For the last time, he said to her: "I love you!"

And she repeated: "I love you!"

That was all, he had already descended by the wood-work, with a supple agility, while, remaining upon the balcony, leaning on the rail, she was following him with her eyes. She had taken the bouquet of violets and was smelling at it to drive away her excitement. And, when he was crossing the Clos-Marie and raised his head, he saw her kissing the flowers.

Félicien had scarcely vanished behind the willows, when Angélique grew uneasy on hearing, below her, the door of the house open. Four o'clock struck, they never awakened until two hours later. Her surprise increased when she recognized Hubertine; for, usually, Hubert was the first to come down-stairs. She saw her walk slowly along the paths of the narrow garden, her arms hanging, her face pale in the morning air, as if a feeling of suffocation had caused her to quit her chamber so early, after a night of sleeplessness. And Hubertine was very handsome yet, in her hastily fastened on garments; and she seemed greatly fatigued, happy and hopeless.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PROCESSION OF THE MIRACLE.

THE next day, on awaking from a sleep of eight hours, one of those sweet and profound slumbers which give rest after great happiness, Angélique ran to her window. The sky was very clear, the hot weather continuing, after a heavy storm which had disturbed her the night before; and she cried joyously to Hubert, who was opening the shutters below her:

"Father, father! see the sun! Ah! how delighted I am! The procession will be fine!"

She quickly dressed herself to come down-stairs. It was that day, the 28th of July, that the Procession of the Miracle was to pass through the streets of Beaumont. And, annually, at that date, the embroiderers took a holiday: they did not touch a needle, but spent the day decorating the house, according to a traditional programme, which, for four hundred years past, the mothers had bequeathed to the daughters.

Angélique, while hastily drinking her coffee, was already thinking of the hangings.

"Mother, they ought to be examined to see if they are in good condition."

"We have plenty of time," answered Hubertine, in her placid voice. "They will not be put up before noon."

They were talking of three admirable pieces of ancient

embroidery, which the Huberts kept religiously as a family relic and brought out once a year—the day the procession passed. Since the preceding day, according to the custom, the master of ceremonies, the good Abbé Cornille, had been going from door to door to notify the inhabitants of the route to be followed by the statue of Saint Agnes, accompanied by Monseigneur, bearing the consecrated host. For more than four centuries this route had remained the same: the departure took place by the Saint Agnes door, the Rue des Orfèvres, the the Grand'Rue and the Rue Basse; then, after having crossed the new town, the procession regained the Rue Magloire and the Place du Cloître to re-enter by the grand façade. And the inhabitants, along the route, rivaled each other in zeal, dressed the windows, hung the walls with their richest stuffs and sowed the stony little sidewalk with rose leaves.

Angélique grew calm only when she was permitted to take the three embroidered pieces from the drawer in which they had lain the entire year.

"There is nothing the matter with them, nothing whatever," murmured she, delighted.

When she had carefully removed the tissue paper which protected them, they appeared, all three devoted to Mary: the Virgin receiving the visit of the Angel, the Virgin weeping at the foot of the cross, and the Virgin ascending to Heaven. They dated from the Fifteenth Century, were in shaded silk upon a background of gold and wonderfully well-preserved; the embroiderers, who had refused large sums for them, were very proud of them.

“ Mother, I will hang them up ! ”

It was quite an affair. Hubert spent the morning in cleaning the aged front. He fastened a broom to the end of a pole and dusted the sections of wood garnished with bricks, as far as the framework of the roof; then, with a sponge, he washed the stone base, as well as all the portions of the stairway turret which he could reach. And the three embroidered pieces, then, were put in their places. Angélique hung them by the rings to the old nails, the Annunciation beneath the window on the left, the Assumption beneath that on the right; as to the Calvary, it had its nails above the huge window of the ground-floor, and she was compelled to bring out a step-ladder to hang it there in its turn. She had already decked the windows with flowers, and the antique dwelling seemed to have returned to the distant time of its youth, with those embroideries of gold and silk glistening in the grand holiday sunlight.

Since breakfast, all the Rue des Orfèvres had been in motion. To avoid the excessive heat, the procession was not to start until five o'clock; but, by noon, the town was making its toilet. Opposite the Huberts, the goldsmith hung his shop with sky-blue draperies, edged with a silver fringe; while the wax-chandler, beside him, utilized the curtains of his alcove, red cottonade curtains, looking like blood in the full light. And at every home were other colors, a profusion of stuffs, all the occupants had, even down to bed-curtains, flapping in the lazy breezes of the hot day. The street was clad with them, of a brilliant and quivering gayety, changed into a gala corridor, open to the sky. All the inhab-

itants were running against each other there, talking in loud tones as if at home, some carrying arm-loads of objects, others climbing, driving nails and shouting. Without counting the reposoir which was being erected at the corner of the Grand'Rue, and which set in motion the women of the neighborhood, eager to furnish the vases and tapers.

Angélique ran to offer the two candelabra in the style of the Empire, which ornamented the mantelpiece of the salon. She had been constantly on the go since morning, but was not in the slightest degree fatigued, sustained and borne along by her great internal joy. And, as she returned, her hair floating in the breeze, plucking roses to pieces in a basket, Hubert said to her, jokingly :

"You will take less trouble on your wedding-day. Is it you, then, who are about to be married?"

"Yes, indeed, it is I!" answered she, gayly.

Hubertine smiled in her turn.

"Meanwhile, since the house is decked, we would do well to go up-stairs and dress ourselves."

"Right away, mother. See, my basket is full.

She was finishing plucking to pieces her roses, which she had reserved to cast before Monseigneur. The petals rained from her slender fingers and the basket overflowed with its light and odorous contents. Then, she disappeared in the narrow stairway of the turret, saying with a burst of laughter:

"I'll soon make myself as beautiful as a star!"

The afternoon was advancing. Now, the excitement of Beaumont-l'Église had quieted down; there was a

quivering expectation in the streets, which were ready at last and humming with discreet voices. The excessive heat had decreased with the slanting sun, there fell from the pale sky, between the cramped houses, only a warm and sharp shadow, of a soft serenity. And the dreaminess was profound, as if all the old town had become a prolongation of the cathedral. The noise of vehicles alone mounted from Beaumont-la-Ville, the new town, on the bank of the Ligneul, where many manufactories did not even suspend work, disdaining to honor this antique religious solemnity.

At four o'clock, the heavy bell of the northern tower, that one the swaying of which shook the house of the Huberts, began to ring; and it was at the same instant that Angélique and Hubertine reappeared, dressed. The latter wore a dress of *écru* stuff, garnished with modest thread lace, but her shape was so youthful, in its robust roundness, that she seemed to be the elder sister of her adopted daughter. Angélique had put on her dress of white foulard; and nothing else, not a jewel in her ears or about her wrists; nothing but her bare hands, her bare neck, nothing but the satin of her skin, emerging from the light stuff like the bloom of a flower. An invisible comb, planted in haste, imperfectly retained the curls of her rebellious hair of a sunny flaxen hue. She was frank and stately, of a pure simplicity and as beautiful as a star.

"Ah!" said she, "they are ringing; Monseigneur has left the bishop's house."

The bell continued, loud and grave, in the great clearness of the heavens. And the Huberts installed them-

selves at the wide-open window of the ground-floor, the two women leaning on the sill, the man standing behind them. These were their usual places; they were in a good position to see well and would be the first to observe the procession come from the depths of the church, without losing a candle of the file.

“Where is my basket?” demanded Angélique.

Hubert was compelled to pass her the basket of roses plucked to pieces, which she kept in her arms, clasped against her bosom.

“Oh! that bell!” murmured she again. “How it rocks us!”

All the little house vibrated, sonorous with the peal of the bell; and the street, the quarter remained in expectation, seized upon by that quiver, while the hangings flapped more languidly in the evening air. The perfume of the roses was very sweet.

Half an hour passed. Then, simultaneously, the two leaves of the Saint Agnes door were thrown open and the depths of the church appeared, their obscurity pricked with the small, gleaming specks of the wax candles. And first the cross-bearer came out, a sub-deacon in a tunic, flanked by two acolytes, each holding a huge lighted torch. Behind them hastened the master of ceremonies, the good Abbé Cornille, who, after having assured himself of the good condition of the street, paused upon the porch and watched the filing off for an instant to ascertain if the proper places were suitably taken. The lay brotherhoods opened the march, pious associations, schools, by rank of seniority. There were some very small children, little girls in white like brides,

curly and bareheaded little boys dressed like princes, delighted and already looking around for their mothers. A brisk little fellow of nine years walked alone, in the centre, dressed to represent St. John the Baptist, with a sheepskin over his meagre bare shoulders. Four gamines, decked with pink ribbons, carried a huge muslin shield on which stood a sheaf of ripe wheat. Then came tall young ladies grouped around a banner of the Virgin, ladies in black, who also had their banner, a bit of crimson silk embroidered with a Saint Joseph, others, other banners yet, in velvet, in satin, poised at the tops of gilded staffs. The brotherhoods of men were not less numerous, penitents of every color, the gray penitents especially, clad in brown stuff, hooded and bearing an emblem which caused a sensation—an immense cross garnished with a wheel, from which hung, hooked on, the instruments of the Passion.

Angélique exclaimed, tenderly, as soon as the children showed themselves:

“Oh! the loves! Look now!”

One, not taller than a boot, hardly three years old, uncertain and proud upon his little feet, passed looking so droll that she plunged her hand into the basket and covered him with a handful of flowers. He vanished, he had roses upon his shoulders, among his hair. And the soft laugh he raised captured one after another, flowers rained from each window. In the buzzing silence of the street, the deadened tread of the procession now alone was heard, while the handful of flowers fell upon the sidewalk with a silent flight. Soon every spot was strewn with them.

But, reassured by the good order of the laity, the Abbé Cornille grew impatient, uneasy because the cortege had stopped for two minutes, and he hastened to regain the head, saluting the Huberts with a smile as he went along.

"What is the matter with them that they do not march?" said Angélique, a prey to excitement, as if she had, at the other end, down there, expected her happiness.

Hubertine answered, with her calm air:

"They have no need to run."

"Some encumbrance, perhaps a reposoir which is being finished," explained Hubert.

The Daughters of the Virgin had begun to sing a hymn, and their sharp voices mounted into the open air with a crystal limpidity. A movement was communicated from one to another and the procession started off again.

Now, after the laity, the clergy commenced to emerge from the church, the lowest in rank first. All, in surplices, put the barretta on their heads upon the porch; and each one held a lighted wax candle, those of the right in the right hand, those of the left in the left hand, beyond the ranks, a double row of small, moving flames, almost extinguished in the full light. First marched the grand seminary, the parishes, the collegiate churches; then came the clerks and the beneficiaries of the cathedral, who were followed by the canons, their shoulders covered with white pluvials. In the midst of them were the choristers, in red silk copes, who had begun the anthem with full voices, and to whom all the clergy responded

with a lighter chant. The hymn, "Pange, Lingua," arose very clearly, the street was full of a great rustling of muslin, the flying wings of surplices, which the little flames of the wax candles riddled with their pale gold stars.

"Oh! Saint Agnes!" murmured Angélique.

She smiled upon the saint, whom four clerks bore upon a litter of blue velvet, ornamented with lace. Every year she experienced astonishment on seeing her thus outside of the gloom in which she had watched for centuries, altogether different beneath the bright light, in her robe of long golden locks. She was so old, and very young nevertheless, with her little hands, her weak little feet and her slight visage of a little girl, blackened by age.

But Monseigneur was to follow her. Already the sound of swinging censers was heard, coming from the depths of the church.

There were whispers and Angélique repeated:

"Monseigneur! Monseigneur!"

And, at that minute, with her eyes upon the saint who was passing, she recalled the old histories, the mighty marquises of Hauteceœur delivering Beaumont from the pestilence, thanks to the intervention of Agnes, Jean V. and all those of his race coming to kneel before her, votaries of her image; and she saw them all, the seigneurs of the Miracle, file off one by one, like a line of princes.

A large space had remained vacant. Then, the chaplain, charged with the care of the crozier, advanced, holding it straight, the bent part towards him. After-

wards appeared two censer-bearers, who walked backwards and slightly swung the censers, each having beside him an acolyte charged with the pan. And the great dais of purple velvet, garnished with gold fringe, had some difficulty in getting through one of the doorways. But order was quickly re-established and the authorities took their staffs. Beneath the dais, between his deacons of honor, Monseigneur walked, bareheaded, his shoulders covered with the white scarf, the two ends of which enveloped his hands, which bore the consecrated host without touching it, holding it very high.

Immediately, the censer-bearers took the field and the censers, sent flying out, fell back in harmony, with the slight silvery sound of their little chains.

Where had Angélique known some one who resembled Monseigneur? A religious absorption bowed all the foreheads. But she, with her head half-bent, was glancing at him. He was of lofty stature, slender and noble, superbly youthful for his sixty years. His eagle eyes shone, his somewhat large nose accentuated the sovereign authority of his face, softened by his white hair, in thick curls; and she noticed the pallor of his complexion, upon which she thought she saw a flow of blood ascend. Perhaps that was only the reflection of the huge golden sun, which he carried in his covered hands and which placed him in a radiance of mystic light.

Certainly, a visage resembling his was evoked from the depths of her recollection. At the first steps he took, Monseigneur had commenced the verses of a psalm, which he recited in a low voice, with his deacons, alternately. And she trembled when she saw him turn

his eyes towards the window at which she was, so stern did he appear to her, of a haughty coldness, condemning the vanity of every passion. His glances had gone to the three ancient embroideries, Mary visited by the Angel, Mary at the foot of the Cross, Mary ascending to Heaven. They expressed delight, then they were lowered and fixed upon her, though, in her confusion, she could not comprehend whether they had paled from harshness or from kindness. Already they had returned to the consecrated host, motionless, extinguished in the reflection of the huge golden sun. The censers were swung out rapidly and fell back with the silvery sound of the little chains, while a small cloud, the smoke of incense, mounted in the air.

But Angélique's heart was beating as if about to break. Behind the dais she had just caught sight of the mitre, Saint Agnes borne away by two angels, the work lovingly embroidered by her, thread by thread, which a chaplain, his fingers enveloped in a veil, was carrying devoutly, like a holy thing. And there, among the laity who followed, in the flood of functionaries, of officers, of magistrates, she had recognized Félicien, in the first rank, slender and blonde, wearing a dress coat, with his curly hair, his straight nose, somewhat large, and his black eyes of a haughty gentleness. She had expected him, and was not surprised to see him at last changed into a prince. To the anxious glance which he cast at her, imploring pardon for his deception, she replied with a pure smile.

"Look there!" murmured Hubertine, in stupefaction. "Is not that our young man?"

She also had recognized him, and she was disturbed when, turning, she saw her daughter transfigured.

"So he has lied to us, eh? Do you know why? Do you know who that young man is?"

Yes, perhaps she knew. A voice within her had replied to recent questions. But she dare not, she did not wish to further interrogate herself. Certainty would come at the proper time. She felt the approach of it in a swelling of pride and of passion.

"What is the matter?" demanded Hubert, leaning over behind his wife.

He was never at the present moment. And, when she had pointed out the young man to him, he did not even recollect him.

"He! Is it possible?"

Then, Hubertine affected to have made a mistake. It was the wisest thing to do—she would make inquiries. But the procession, which had halted anew while Monseigneur, at the corner of the street, was perfuming the consecrated host with incense, amid the verdure of the reposoir, was about to move on again; and Angélique, whose hand had been forgotten in the depths of the basket, holding a last handful of rose leaves, made a too prompt movement and cast the flowers in her spell-bound confusion. Just at that moment Félicien resumed his march. The flowers rained down, and two petals, swaying slowly, flew upon his hair.

It was the end. The dais had disappeared at the corner of the Grand'Rue, the last of the cortege flowed away, leaving the sidewalk deserted, religiously absorbed, as if made drowsy by dreamy faith, amid the somewhat

biting exhalations of the trodden roses. And they heard yet, in the distance, growing fainter and fainter, the silvery sound of the little chains, falling back at each flight of the censers.

"Oh! won't you, mother?" cried Angélique. "Let us go into the church to see them return!"

Hubertine's first impulse was to refuse. But she herself felt such a strong desire to acquire certainty that she consented.

"Yes, presently, since it will give you pleasure."

But it was necessary to be patient. Angélique, who had gone up-stairs to put on a hat, could not remain in one place. She returned every minute to the window, which was still wide-open; she interrogated the end of the street, raised her eyes as if to interrogate space itself; and she spoke aloud, she followed the procession.

"They are coming down the Rue Basse. Ah! they must be filing out upon the square in front of the Sous-Préfecture. The great streets of Beaumont-la-Ville have no end. And it's much pleasure those cloth merchants take in seeing Saint Agnes!"

A fine pink mist, delicately cut by a trellis of gold, hovered in the sky. It was felt in the motionlessness of the air that all civil life was suspended, that God had quitted His house and that every one was waiting for Him to be taken back there to resume their daily occupations. Opposite, the blue draperies of the goldsmith and the red curtains of the wax-chandler yet barred their shops. The streets seemed asleep, there was only the slow passage, from one to another, of the clergy, whose tread was divined at all points of the town.

"Mother, mother, I assure you that they are at the entrance of the Rue Magloire. They are about to ascend the slope."

She told a falsehood; it was only half-past six o'clock, and the procession never returned before a quarter past seven. She was well aware that the dais must, at that moment, be passing along the low quays of the Ligneul. But she was in such haste!

"Mother, let us hurry; we will not get places."

"Well, come along!" said Hubertine at last, smiling in spite of herself.

"As for me, I shall stay here," declared Hubert. "I will take down the embroideries and set the table."

The church seemed empty to them, God no longer being there. All its doors had remained open, like those of a house in confusion, where the return of the master is awaited. But few people had entered; the main altar alone, a strict sarcophagus of the Twelfth Century style, glowed in the depths of the nave, starred with wax candles; and the rest of the vast interior, the lateral naves and the chapels were filling up with darkness beneath the fall of twilight.

Slowly, Angélique and Hubertine made the tour. Below, the edifice had a crushing effect; short, thick pillars supported the full arches of the wings. They walked along the gloomy chapels, buried like crypts. Then, when they crossed in front of the principal door, beneath the organ loft, they felt a sensation of deliverance on raising their eyes toward the lofty Gothic windows of the nave, which shot up above the heavy Twelfth Century masonry. But they went on along the southern

lateral nave and the stifling effect recommenced. At the cross of the transept, four enormous columns were at the four corners, mounting in a sustained flight to the arched roof; and there still reigned a mauve brightness, the adieu of the day among the roses of the lateral façades. They climbed the three steps which led to the choir gallery, they went around the circumference of the arch, the most anciently erected portion, which was entombed as in a sepulchre. For an instant, against the highly ornamented old grating, which closed the choir gallery on all sides, they paused to look at the scintillation of the main altar, the little flames of which were reflected in the polished old oak of the stalls, marvellous stalls all flowered with sculpture. And they came back thus to their point of departure, raising their heads anew, believing they felt the wind of the flight of the nave, while the growing shadows recoiled, enlarging the antique walls, where the remains of gold and painting were fading.

"I knew it was too soon," said Hubertine.

Angélique, without replying, murmured:

"How grand it is!"

It seemed to her that she was not acquainted with the church, that she saw it for the first time. Her eyes wandered over the motionless rows of chairs, went to the depths of the chapels, where one divined the old tombstones only by a redoubling of shade. But she encountered the Hauteceur Chapel, she recognized the stained glass window, which at last had been repaired, with its Saint George as vague as a vision in the dying light. And it gave her great joy.

At that moment, a swaying animated the cathedral; the heavy bell again began to peal.

"Ah!" said she, "they are coming, they are coming up the Rue Magloire."

This time, it was true. A wave of the crowd invaded the wings, and one felt the nearer approach of the procession from minute to minute. This sensation increased with the peals of the bell, with a great breath which came from without through the yawning principal door. God was returning.

Angélique, leaning upon Hubertine's shoulder, standing on the tips of her toes, watched that open doorway, the rotundity of which carved itself in the white twilight of the Place du Cloître. First, reappeared the sub-deacon bearing the cross, flanked by the two acolytes with their candlesticks; and, behind them, hastened the master of ceremonies, the good Abbé Cornille, panting, broken with fatigue. On the threshold of the church, each new arrival detached himself for a second, in a clear and vigorous silhouette, then lost himself in the interior darkness. They were the laity, the schools, the associations, the brotherhoods, whose banners swayed like sails and then were suddenly swallowed up by the gloom. One saw again the white group of the Daughters of the Virgin, who entered singing with their sharp seraphim voices. The cathedral was constantly swallowing; the nave filled slowly, the men on the right, the women on the left. But night had come on; the square, in the distance, was pricked with sparks, with hundreds of small, moving lights, and it was the turn of the clergy, with their lighted wax candles beyond

the ranks, a double cordon of yellow flames which passed through the door. This seemed endless, the wax candles succeeded each other, multiplied, the grand seminary, the parishes, the cathedral, the choristers attacking the anthem, the canons in white pluvials. And, gradually, then, the church was lighted up, peopled with these flames, illuminated, riddled with hundreds of stars like a summer sky.

Two chairs were free; Angélique got upon one of them.

"Get down!" said Hubertine. "That's forbidden!"

But she calmly persisted.

"Why forbidden? I want to see. Oh! it's beautiful!"

And she finally persuaded her mother to get upon the other chair.

Now, all the cathedral was glowing, fiery. That swell of wax candles which was crossing it kindled reflections beneath the low vaults of the lateral naves, in the depths of the chapels, where sparkled the glass of a shrine, the gold of a tabernacle. Even in the circumference of the arch, as far as the sepulchral crypts, rays awoke. The choir flamed, with its fiery altar, its gleaming stalls and its old grating, the roses of which stood out in black. And the flight of the nave became still more clearly defined, below, the heavy thick-set pillars supporting the full arches, above, the fascies of little columns dwindling away, blooming, amid the broken arches of the ogives, a whole rapture of faith and love, which was like the very radiance of the light.

But, amid the roll of feet and the moving of chairs,

one heard anew the fall of the tinkling little chains of the censers. And the organs immediately chanted an enormous phrase, which overflowed and filled the vaults with the muttering of thunder. Monseigneur was still in the square. Saint Agnes, at that moment, reached the arch, yet borne by the clerks, her face wearing a calm look in the glow of the wax candles, delighted to return to her dreams of four centuries. Finally, preceded by the crozier, followed by the mitre, Monseigneur re-entered, holding the consecrated host in the same way, in both his hands covered with the scarf. The dais, which was filing off in the centre of the nave, stopped before the choir grating. There a little confusion occurred, and the bishop was for a moment brought near to the persons of his suite.

Since Félicien had reappeared, behind the mitre, Angélique had not taken her eyes from him. Now, it happened that he was crowded to the right of the dais; and, at that instant, she saw, with the same glance, the white head of Monseigneur and the blonde head of the young man. A flash passed over her eyelids, she clasped her hands and spoke aloud:

“Oh! Monseigneur, Monseigneur’s son!”

Her secret had escaped from her. It was an involuntary cry, the certainty which had finally established itself in the sudden light of their resemblance. Perhaps, within herself, she had known it before, but she would not have dared even to think of it; while now it shone forth and dazzled her. From every direction, from herself and from things, remembrances arose and repeated her cry.

Hubertine, astounded, murmured :

“ Monseigneur’s son !—that young man ! ”

People had pushed up around the pair. They recognized and admired them, the mother still adorable in her toilet of plain stuff, the daughter as graceful as an archangel, with her dress of white foulard, as supple as a feather. They were so handsome and so readily seen, thus mounted upon the chairs, that glances were raised to and riveted upon them.

“ Yes, indeed, my good lady,” said Mère Lemballeuse, who was in the group, “ yes, indeed, he is Monseigneur’s son ! What ! didn’t you know it ? And a handsome young man, and rich, ah ! rich enough to buy the town, if he wanted it. He has millions, millions ! ”

Hubertine listened, as pale as death.

“ Haven’t you heard the story ? ” continued the old mendicant. “ His mother died when he was born, and it was then that Monseigneur became a priest. Now, he has resolved to keep him with him.—Félicien VII. of Hauteœur, a real prince, as one might say.”

Then, a look of great trouble settled on Hubertine’s face. And° Angélique was radiant before her dream, which was realizing itself. Still she was not astonished, she had well known that he must be the richest, the handsomest, the noblest ; but her joy was immense, perfect, without fear of obstacles, which she did not foresee. At last, he had made himself known, he had given himself in his turn. The gold gushed with the little flames of the wax candles, the organs sang the pomp of their betrothal, the line of the Hauteœurs filed off royally from the depths of the legend : Norbert I., Jean

V., Félicien III., Jean XII.; then, the last, Félicien VII., who had turned his blonde head towards her. He was the descendant of the cousins of the Virgin, the master, the superb Jesus, revealing himself in his glory beside his father!

At that instant, Félicien smiled upon her, and she did not notice the angry look of Monseigneur, who had just perceived her standing upon the chair, above the crowd, the blood in her face, proud and passionate.

“Ah! my poor child!” sighed Hubertine, in despair.

But the chaplains and the acolytes had ranged themselves to the right and the left, and the first deacon, having taken the consecrated host from Monseigneur's hands, placed it upon the altar. Then came the final benediction, the “Tantum Ergo” thundered by the choristers, the incense of the perfuming-pans smoking in the censers, the great, sudden silence of the prayer. And, in the centre of the fiery church, overflowing with the clergy and the people, beneath the lofty arches, Monseigneur ascended to the altar, took up with both hands the great golden sun, which, three times, he moved in the air, slowly making the sign of the cross.

CHAPTER IX.

A CRUEL SHOCK.

THAT very evening, on returning from the church, Angélique thought: "I shall see him presently: he will be in the Clos-Marie, and I will go down there to meet him." Their eyes had appointed this rendezvous.

They did not dine until eight o'clock, in the kitchen, according to custom. Hubert was the only one who talked, excited by the holiday. Hubertine, grown very serious, scarcely answered, keeping her glance fixed on the young girl, who was eating with an enormous appetite, but unconsciously, without appearing to know that she was lifting the fork to her mouth, wholly absorbed in her dream. And Hubertine read her clearly, saw her thoughts form and follow each other one by one beneath her frank forehead as beneath the crystal of pure water.

At nine o'clock, a pull at the door bell astonished them. It was the Abbé Cornille. Despite his fatigue, he had come to inform them that Monseigneur had greatly admired the three ancient pieces of embroidery.

"Yes, he spoke of them in my presence. I knew that you would be delighted to learn what he said."

Angélique, who, at the mention of Monseigneur's name, had exhibited interest, fell back into her reverie as soon as they began to talk of the procession. Then, after a few minutes, she arose to her feet.

"Where are you going?" questioned Hubertine.

This query surprised her, as if she herself had not asked herself why she arose.

"Mother, I am going up-stairs; I am greatly fatigued."

And, behind that excuse, Hubertine divined the real reason—the need of being alone with her happiness.

"Come embrace me."

When she held her pressed against her in her arms, she felt her quiver. She almost avoided her usual evening kiss. Then, very grave, she looked her in the face and read in her eyes the accepted rendezvous and her eagerness to go to it.

"Be prudent and sleep well."

But already Angélique, after a hasty good-night to Hubert and the Abbé Cornille, had gone up to her chamber in affright, so plainly had she felt that her secret had been upon her lips. If her mother had held her a second longer against her heart, she would have spoken. When she had double locked herself in, the light annoyed her and she blew out her candle. The moon now rose later and later and the night was very dark. Without undressing herself, seated before the window open upon the darkness, she waited for hours. The minutes fled rapidly away, one idea sufficing to keep her occupied: she would go down to meet him at the stroke of midnight. This would be brought about very naturally; she saw herself advance step by step, movement by movement, with that ease one has in dreams. Almost immediately, she had heard the Abbé Cornille take his departure. Afterwards, the Huberts had come up-stairs in their turn. Twice it seemed to her that

their chamber door reopened, that stealthy feet advanced as far as the stairway, as if some one had come to listen there for an instant. Then, the house appeared to be plunged in a profound sleep.

When the hour had struck, Angélique arose.

"I will go—he is waiting for me."

And she opened her door, which she did not even close again. On the stairway, as she passed before the Huberts' chamber, she listened; but she heard nothing, nothing save the quiver of the silence. Besides, she was altogether at her ease, without either fear or haste, not realizing that she was in fault. A power led her; it seemed to her so simple that the idea of a danger would have made her smile. Below, she went out into the garden through the kitchen and again forgot to shut the door after her. Then, with her rapid step, she gained the little gate which opened upon the Clos-Marie, leaving that also wide-open behind her. In the Clos, despite the thick gloom, she felt no hesitation, but walked straight to the plank, crossed the Chevrotte and went groping about as if in a familiar spot where each tree was known to her. And, turning to the right, beneath a willow, she had but to stretch out her hands to meet the hands of him whom she knew to be there, waiting for her.

Mute for an instant, Angélique pressed in hers the hands of Félicien. They could not see each other, for the sky was clouded by a heat mist which the slender moon just arisen had not yet illuminated. And she spoke in the darkness, her whole heart relieved itself of its great joy.

"Ah! my dear seigneur, how I love you and how I thank you!"

She laughed because she knew him at last, she thanked him for being young, handsome and rich, much more so than she had hoped. It was a ringing gayety, a cry of amazement and gratitude in the presence of that gift of love which her dream had made her.

"You are the king, you are my master, and I belong to you; I regret only that I am of such small importance. But I am proud to be yours; that you love me will suffice to make me a queen in my turn. It was useless for me to know and wait for you, my heart has enlarged since you have become so great in it. Ah! my dear seigneur, how I thank you and how I love you!"

Then, he gently put his arm about her waist; he led her away, saying:

"Come to my home."

He took her to the back of the Clos-Marie, through the wild grass; and she discovered how, every evening, he had entered by means of the old grating of the bishop's house, which had been nailed up in the past. He had left this grating open; he introduced her upon his arm into Monseigneur's vast garden. In the sky, the moon gradually rising, hidden behind the veil of hot vapors, whitened them with a milky transparency. The whole heavens, without a star, were filled with a dust of brightness, which rained silently down amid the serenity of the night. They went slowly up the Chevrotte, the course of which traversed the park; but it was no longer the rapid brook, hurled over a stony declivity; it was a calm streamlet, a languid streamlet, wandering

amid clumps of trees. And, beneath the luminous mist, between those bathed and swaying trees, the elysian stream seemed to roll away in a dream.

Angélique resumed, joyously :

"I am so proud and so happy to be thus upon your arm !"

Félicien, delighted with so much simplicity and charm, listened to her speaking without embarrassment, hiding nothing, saying aloud what she thought, in the innocence of her heart.

"Ah ! dear soul, it is I who ought to be grateful to you for being willing to love me a little in such a pretty way. But tell me why you love me, tell me what took place within you when, at last, you discovered who I was."

But, with a pretty gesture of impatience, she interrupted him.

"No, no, let us talk of you, nothing but you. Do I count for anything? Does it matter what I am, what I think? It is you alone who exist now."

And, pressing herself against him, slackening her pace along the enchanted brook, she questioned him endlessly, she wished to know everything—his childhood, his youth, the twenty years he had lived away from his father.

"I know that your mother died at your birth and that you grew up at the home of an uncle, an old abbé. I know that Monseigneur refused to see you."

Then, Félicien spoke very low, in a far-off voice, which seemed to mount from the past.

"Yes, my father adored my mother; I was guilty of

coming and killing her. My uncle brought me up in ignorance of my family, harshly, as if I had been a poor infant entrusted to his care. I learned the truth only very late, scarcely two years ago. But I was not surprised, I had felt that great fortune back of me. All regular toil wearied me, I was good only to scour the fields. Then, my passion for the stained glass windows of our little church declared itself."

Angélique laughed and he also brightened up.

"I am a toiler like you; I had decided to win my bread by painting stained glass windows, when all this money fell down upon me. And my father was greatly vexed when my uncle wrote to him that I was a devil, that never would I enter into orders! It was his formal wish to see me a priest, perhaps in the idea that I would thus make amends for the murder of my mother. He gave it up, however, and recalled me to him. Ah! how good is it to live, to live!—to live in order to love and be loved!"

His healthy and virgin youth vibrated in that cry, with which the calm night quivered. It was the passion, the passion of which his mother had died, the passion which had cast him to this first love, evolved from mystery. All his fury came out in it, his beauty, his loyalty, his ignorance and his greedy desire for life.

"I was like you, I was waiting, and the night you appeared at your window I also recognized you. Tell me what you were dreaming about, relate to me something concerning your previous days."

But again she closed his mouth.

"No, let us talk of you, nothing but you. I would

like nothing concerning you to remain concealed from me. Let me hold you, let me love you in your entirety!"

And she did not weary of hearing him talk of himself, in an ecstatic joy at knowing him, adoring like a holy maid at the feet of Jesus. And neither the one nor the other tired of repeating the same things incessantly—how they had fallen in love, how they loved. The words returned alike, but always new, taking unforeseen, unfathomable meanings. Their happiness increased as they descended into it, as they tasted its music upon their lips. He confessed to her the spell in which she held him with her voice alone, so affected that he became her slave merely on hearing it. She avowed the delicious fear into which he threw her when his white skin grew purple with a rush of blood at the slightest anger. And they had now quitted the misty banks of the Chevrotte, they had plunged into the gloomy grove of tall elms, their arms about each other's waists.

"Oh! this garden," murmured Angélique, enjoying the coolness which fell from the leaves. "For years I have wanted to come in here. And I am here with you, I am here!"

She did not ask him whither he was conducting her, she abandoned herself upon his arm amid the shadows of the aged tree-trunks. The ground was soft to the feet, the arches of leaves lost themselves very high up, like the arches of a church. Not a sound, not a breath—nothing but the beating of their hearts.

At last, he pushed open the door of a pavilion and said to her:

"Enter; you are at my home."

It was there that his father had deemed fit to lodge him, apart, in that remote corner of the park. There was, below, a grand salon; above, a complete suite of apartments. A lamp lighted the vast room of the ground-floor.

"You see plainly," resumed he, with a smile, "that you are at the house of an artisan. There is my workshop."

A workshop, indeed, the caprice of a rich young man, who, in the guise of a trade, took pleasure in painting on glass. He had revived the ancient processess of the Thirteenth Century, and could believe himself one of those primitive painters on glass, producing masterpieces with the imperfect means of the day. The ancient table sufficed for him, covered with melted chalk, upon which he designed in red, and where he cut the glass with a hot iron, disdaining the diamond. At that moment, the moufle, a little oven, reconstructed after a design, was charged; the process of baking was going on there, the repairing of another stained glass window of the cathedral; and there was also in the room, in boxes, glass of every color, which he must have had manufactured for himself, the blues, the yellows, the greens, the reds, pale, sprinkled, smoky, sombre, mother-of-pearl, intense. But the room was hung with admirable stuffs, the workshop vanished beneath a marvellous luxury of furnishing. At the back, upon an antique tabernacle which served it for a pedestal, a tall gilded Virgin was smiling with its purple lips.

"And you work, you work," repeated Angélique with the joy of a child.

She was greatly amused by the oven, she exacted from him an explanation of all his work: why he contented himself, after the example of the old masters, with employing glass colored in the paste, which he merely shaded with black; why he clung to small, distinct personages, accentuating the looks and the draperies; and his ideas about the art of the glass-stainer, which had declined since they had begun to paint on glass, to enamel it, in designing better; and his final opinion that a stained glass work should be solely a transparent mosaic, the most lively tones arranged in the most harmonious order, a whole delicate and brilliant bouquet of colors. But, at that moment, she cared nothing whatever about the art of the glass-stainer. Those things had but one interest—coming from him, occupying her further with him, being like a very dependency of his person.

“Ah!” said she, “we shall be happy. You will paint, I will embroider.”

He had again taken her hands, in the centre of the vast room, the great luxury of which put her at her ease and seemed the natural medium for her grace to bloom in. And both of them were silent for an instant. Then, she again spoke.

“So it is settled?”

“What?” demanded he, smiling.

“Our marriage.”

He hesitated for a second. His exceedingly white face had suddenly colored. This made her uneasy.

“Have I made you angry?”

But already he had grasped her hands, with an embrace which enveloped her bodily.

"It is settled. You have only to desire a thing to have it done, despite the obstacles. I live but for one purpose—to obey you."

Then, she grew radiant.

"We will marry, we will always love each other and we will never separate more."

She did not doubt that this would be accomplished on the morrow, with the ease of the miracles of the Legend. The idea of the smallest impediment, of the least delay did not even occur to her. Why, since they loved each other, should they be separated any longer? People adore each other, get married and it is very simple. She was filled with a great tranquil joy.

"It is settled; tap me in the hand," she resumed, jokingly.

He bore the little hand to his lips.

"It is settled."

And, as she was about departing, afraid of being surprised by the dawn, in haste also to have done with her secret, he wished to accompany her back.

"No, no, we should not arrive before day. I will find my road very well. Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

Félicien obeyed, contented himself with watching Angélique depart, and she ran beneath the sombre elms, she ran along the Chevrotte bathed with light. Already she had cleared the grating of the park, then had started across the high grass of the Clos-Marie. As she ran, she thought that she could never be patient until sunrise, that the best course was to knock at the Huberts' door in order to awaken them and tell them all.

It was an expansion of happiness, a revolt of frankness: she felt herself incapable of keeping for five minutes longer that secret kept for so long. She entered the garden and shut the gate.

And there, against the cathedral, Angélique perceived Hubertine, who was waiting for her in the darkness, seated upon the stone bench, which a thin clump of lilacs surrounded. Awakened, warned by an anguish, the latter had gone up-stairs, had understood on finding the doors open. And, anxious, not knowing where to go, fearing to aggravate matters, she was waiting.

Angélique at once cast herself upon her neck, without confusion, her heart bounding with joy, laughing gayly at no longer having anything to conceal.

"Ah! mother, it is settled. We are going to get married and I am so happy!"

Before replying, Hubertine examined her fixedly. But her fears subsided before that innocence in bloom, those limpid eyes and those pure lips. Only a great deal of grief remained; tears flowed down her cheeks.

"My poor child!" murmured she, as in the church the preceding evening.

Angélique, surprised to see her thus, she, so well-balanced, who never wept, exclaimed:

"What, mother, you worrying yourself? It is true that I have behaved rashly, that I have had a secret from you. But if you only knew how heavily it has weighed upon me! One does not speak at first, afterwards one dare not. You must pardon me."

She had sat down beside her and passed a caressing arm about her waist. The old bench seemed sunken

into that mossy corner of the cathedral. Above their heads, the lilacs made a shade; and there was that eglantine which the young girl had cultivated to see if it would not bear roses; but, neglected for some time, it had vegetated, it had returned to the wild state.

“Mother, I will whisper everything in your ear.”

In a low voice, then, she related to her their love affair in an inexhaustible flow of words, reviving the slightest facts, growing animated in reviving them. She omitted nothing, searched her memory as if for a confession. And she was not embarrassed by it; the blood of passion warmed her cheeks and a flame of pride lighted her eyes, though she did not raise her whispering and ardent voice.

Hubertine at length interrupted her, also speaking in a low tone.

“Come, come, what a strain you are on! It is in vain that you correct yourself, every time you are borne away as if by a great gale. Ah! proud one, ah! passionate one, you are still the little girl who refused to scrub up the kitchen and who kissed her hands.”

Angélique could not prevent herself from laughing.

“No, do not laugh; soon you will not have enough tears to shed. This marriage will never take place, my poor child.”

At once her gayety broke forth, sonorous and prolonged.

“Mother, mother, what are you saying? It is to tease me or to punish me? It is so simple! This evening, he will talk about the matter with his father. To-morrow, he will come to arrange everything with you.”

Did she really imagine that? Hubertine was forced to be pitiless. A little embroiderer, without money, without name, wed Félicien d'Hauteceur!—a young man worth fifty millions!—the last descendant of one of the oldest houses of France!

But, at each new obstacle, Angélique replied, tranquilly:

“Why not?”

It would be a real scandal, a marriage outside of the ordinary conditions of happiness. Everything arose to prevent it. Did she, then, count upon struggling against everything?

“Why not?”

Monseigneur was said to be proud of his name, severe against the tendernesses of adventure. Could she hope to bend him?

“Why not?”

And, firm in her faith:

“It is funny, mother, how wicked you believe the world! I tell you that things will move along well! Two months ago, you scolded me, you bantered me, remember, and yet I was right!—all that I announced has been realized.”

“But, unhappy girl, await the end!”

Hubertine grieved, tormented by her remorse for having left Angélique so ignorant. She would have liked to tell her the hard lessons of reality, to enlighten her as to the cruelties, the abominations of the world, but was seized with embarrassment and could not find the necessary words. What sorrow, if, one day, she had to accuse herself of having caused the misfortune of this child,

reared thus as a recluse, in the continual falsehood of a dream !

“ See here, my darling, you would not, however, wed this young man in spite of all of us, in spite of his father? ”

Angélique grew serious, looked her in the face and then said, in a grave tone:

“ Why not? I love him and he loves me.”

Her mother again took her in both arms and drew her against her; and she also looked at her, without yet speaking, trembling. The veiled moon had sunk behind the cathedral, and the flying mists had turned a faint pink in the sky at the approach of day. Both of them bathed in this early purity, in the great cool silence, which the awakening of the birds alone troubled with little cries.

“ Oh ! my child, only duty and obedience cause happiness. One suffers all one's life for an hour of passion and pride. If you wish to be happy, submit, renounce and vanish.”

But she felt her rebel in her embrace, and that which she had never told her of, that which she hesitated still to tell her, escaped from her lips.

“ Listen. You believe your father and myself happy. We should be so, if a torment had not spoiled our lives.”

She lowered her voice further, she related to her in a trembling breath their history, the marriage in spite of her mother, the death of the child, the vain desire to have another, beneath the punishment of the fault. Nevertheless, they adored each other, they had lived by toil, without needs; and they were unhappy, they would

certainly have got to quarrelling, led a life of hell, perhaps reached a violent separation, had it not been for their efforts, her kindness to him and his consideration towards her.

“Reflect, my child; put nothing in your existence from which you may suffer later on. Be humble, obey, and silence the blood of your heart.”

Thus attacked, Angélique listened to her, very pale, restraining her tears.

“Mother, you give me pain. I love him and he loves me.”

And her tears flowed. She was upset by the confidence, softened, with a scared look in her eyes, as if wounded by this corner of truth of which she had caught a glimpse. But she did not yield. She would have died so gladly of her love!

Then, Hubertine made her decision.

“I did not wish to cause you so much pain at one time. Nevertheless, you must know. Last evening, when you had gone up-stairs, I questioned the Abbé Cornille; I learned why Monseigneur, who resisted for so long, has deemed it his duty to summon his son to Beaumont. One of his great vexations was the passion of this young man, the eagerness he displayed to live outside of every rule. After having sadly renounced making a priest of him, he no longer even hoped to start him in some occupation suitable to his rank and fortune. He would never be anything but an impassioned fellow, a fool, an artist. He was frightened at seeing himself revived in him, in that madness of passion from which he had so cruelly suffered. And it was then that, fearing

some foolishness of the heart, he brought him here in order to get him married immediately."

"Well?" said Angélique, without yet understanding.

"A marriage was projected even before his arrival, and everything seems now to be settled; the Abbé Cornille formally told me that he was to wed Mademoiselle Claire de Voincourt in the autumn. You know the hôtel of the Voincourts there, near the bishop's house. They are closely united with Monseigneur. On one side and the other, nothing better could be wished for, either as regards name or money. The abbé highly approves of this union."

The young girl no longer heard these plausible reasons. An image had suddenly been evoked before her eyes, that of Claire. She again saw her pass, such as she had seen her occasionally in the paths of her park in the winter, such as she had found her in the cathedral at the fêtes: a tall, dark young lady, of her own age, very handsome, of a beauty more brilliant than hers, with a step of royal distinction. She was said to be exceedingly kind, despite her air of coldness.

"That tall young lady, so beautiful, so rich. He is going to marry her."

She murmured this as in a dream. Then, her heart was wrung and she cried:

"So he lies!—he did not tell me that."

The recollection had returned to her of the brief hesitation of Félicien, of the rush of blood which had purpled his cheeks when she had spoken to him of their marriage. The shock was so rough that her pale face glided upon her mother's shoulder.

"My pet, my dear pet. It is very cruel I know. But, if you waited, it would be yet more cruel. Then, instantly snatch the knife from the wound. Repeat to yourself, on each awakening of your pain, that Monseigneur, the terrible Jean XII., whose intractable haughtiness, it seems, the world yet recalls, would never give his son, the last of his race, to a little embroiderer, picked up beneath a doorway."

In her weakness, Angélique heard this and no longer rebelled. What had she felt pass over her face? A cold breath, come from afar, above the roofs, froze her blood. Was it that misery of the world, that sad reality, which had been mentioned to her as the wolf is mentioned to unreasonable children? She had still a pain from having been merely grazed by it. Already, however, she was excusing Félicien: he had not lied, he had simply remained mute. If his father had wished to marry him to that young girl, he, without doubt, had refused her. But he dare not yet enter into a struggle; and, since he had said nothing, perhaps he was making his decision about it. Before this first blow, pale, touched by the rough finger of life, she still remained believing, had faith in her dream. The things would be realized, only her pride was humbled, she had fallen back into the humility of grace.

"Mother, it is true that I have sinned and I will sin no longer. I promise you that I will not rebel, to be that which Heaven wishes me to be."

It was the grace which had spoken; the victory remained with the surroundings amid which she had grown up, with the education which she had received there. Why should she doubt the morrow, since, until

then, everything surrounding her had shown itself so generous and so tender towards her? She wished to preserve the wisdom of Catherine, the modesty of Elizabeth and the chastity of Agnes, comforted by the support of the saints, certain that they alone would aid her to conquer. Would not her old friend, the cathedral, the Clos-Marie and the Chevrotte, the cool little house of the Huberts, the Huberts themselves, all that which she loved, defend her, without being compelled to act herself, simply obedient and pure?

"Then, you promise me that you will never do anything against our will, nor against Monseigneur?"

"Yes, mother, I promise."

"You promise me never again to see this young man and to think no more of the folly of marrying him?"

There, her heart weakened. A final rebellion nearly broke out in her, crying her love. Then, she bent her head, definitively conquered.

"I promise to do nothing to see him again and to induce him to marry me."

Hubertine, greatly moved, clasped her desperately in her arms, in thankfulness for her obedience. Ah! what misery to desire the welfare of those one loves and yet make them suffer! She was broken, she arose, surprised by the light which was increasing. The little cries of the birds had augmented, without a single one being seen to fly. In the sky, the mists had scattered.

And Angélique, then, her glance having fallen mechanically upon her eglantine, at length perceived it, with its puny flowers. She gave a sad laugh.

"You were right, mother; it is not likely to bear roses."

CHAPTER X.

MONSEIGNEUR.

IN the morning at seven o'clock, as usual, Angélique was at work; and the days followed each other, and every morning she very calmly resumed the chasuble laid aside the evening before. Nothing seemed changed, she strictly kept her word, cloistered herself, without seeking to see Félicien again. This did not appear even to make her gloomy, she maintained her gay, youthful countenance, smiling at Hubertine when she surprised her with eyes fixed upon her in astonishment. Nevertheless, in this willing silence, she thought only of him the entire day. Her hope remained invincible, she was certain that everything would be realized in spite of all. And it was this certitude which gave her great air of courage, so sincere and so proud.

Hubert, sometimes, scolded her.

"You work too much, I see you are a trifle pale. Do you sleep well?"

"Oh! father, like a log! I have never been in better health."

But Hubertine, in her turn, grew uneasy and spoke of taking some amusement.

"If you like, we will shut up the house and all three make a trip to Paris."

"Ah! indeed! and the orders, mother? I tell you that my health comes from hard work!"

In fact, Angélique was simply awaiting a miracle, some manifestation of the invisible, which would give her to Félicien. Setting aside her promise to attempt nothing, what was the good of acting, since the beyond always acted for her? Therefore, in her voluntary inertia, while feigning indifference, she kept a continually attentive ear, listening to the voices, to that which quivered about her, to the familiar little sounds of the circle in which she lived and which was going to aid her. Something surely would be compelled to happen. Bent over her frame, the window open, she did not let a quiver of the trees, a murmur of the Chevrotte, escape her. The slightest sighs from the cathedral reached her, increased tenfold by attention: she heard everything, even to the slippered tread of the beadle, extinguishing the wax candles. Again, beside her, she felt the grazing of mysterious wings, she knew that she was assisted by the unknown; and sometimes she turned suddenly, believing that a shade had murmured a means of victory in her ear. But the days passed and still nothing came.

At night, that she might not be false to her oath, Angélique at first avoided going upon the balcony, afraid of rejoining Félicien should she perceive him below. She waited in the depths of her chamber. Then, as the leaves themselves did not stir, asleep, she took the risk, she recommenced to question the darkness. From whence would the miracle spring? Without doubt, from the garden of the bishop's house a flaming hand would beckon her to come. Perhaps from the cathedral, where the organs would thunder and summon her to the altar. Nothing would have surprised her, neither the

doves of the Legend, bringing words of benediction, nor the intervention of the female saints, entering through the walls to announce to her that Monseigneur wished to see her. And but one thing astonished her—the slowness of the prodigy to operate. Like the days, the nights succeeded the nights, but still nothing, nothing whatever appeared.

After the second week, what astonished Angélique yet more was that she had not seen Félicien again. She had, indeed, entered into the engagement to attempt nothing to get near to him; but, without saying it, she had counted that he would do everything to get near to her; and the Clos-Marie remained empty, he no more even crossed the wild grass. Not once in fifteen days, during the hours of night, had she perceived his shadow. This did not shake her faith: if he did not come, it was because he was looking after their welfare. Nevertheless, her surprise was increasing, mingled with a commencement of uneasiness.

Finally, one evening, the dinner was gloomy at the embroiderers', and as Hubert went out under the pretext of a pressing errand, Hubertine was left alone with Angélique in the kitchen. For a long while she looked at her with humid eyes, affected by her stout courage. During the fifteen days that they had said not a word of the matters with which their hearts were overflowing, she had been touched by her strength and loyalty in keeping her oath. A sudden fit of tenderness made her open both her arms; the young girl cast herself upon her bosom and they mutely embraced.

Then, when Hubertine could speak, she said:

"Ah! my poor child, I have waited to be alone with you; it is imperative for you to know. All is ended, wholly ended."

Bewildered, Angélique drew herself up, crying:

"Félicien is dead!"

"No, no."

"If he does not come, it is because he is dead!"

And Hubertine was forced to explain that, on the day after the procession, she had seen him in order to exact also from him the oath to appear no more while he had not Monseigneur's authorization. It was a definitive dismissal, for she knew that the marriage was impossible. She had upset him by showing him his evil action, that poor, confiding girl, ignorant of everything, whom he was injuring, without the ability one day to marry her; and he also had cried out that he would die of grief from not seeing her again rather than be disloyal. That very evening he made his confession to his father.

"See," resumed Hubertine, "you have so much courage that I speak to you without circumlocution. Ah! if you knew, pet, how I have pitied and admired you since I have beheld you so proud, so brave as to keep silent and be gay when your heart was breaking. But you will need more courage, a great deal more. I met the Abbé Cornille this afternoon. All is ended, Monseigneur will not have it."

She had expected a burst of tears, and was astonished to see her reseated herself, very pale, but with a tranquil air. The old oaken table had just been cleared, a lamp lighted the antique common room, the silence of which was broken only by the hum of the boiler.

"Mother, nothing is ended. Relate to me what you learned. I have the right to be informed, have I not, since the matter concerns me?"

And she listened attentively to what Hubertine thought she could tell her of the information she had obtained from the abbé, skipping certain details, continuing to conceal life from the ignorant girl.

Since he had summoned his son to him, Monseigneur had lived in trouble. After having removed him from his presence, on the day succeeding the death of his wife, and remained twenty years without consenting to know him, he beheld him in the strength and flush of youth, the living portrait of her for whom he wept, possessing her soul, the blonde grace of her beauty. That long exile, that animosity against the child who had cost him the mother, was also a measure of prudence: he felt it now and regretted that he had changed his decision. Age, twenty years of prayers, God in his bosom, nothing had killed the former man. And it sufficed that this son of his flesh, this flesh of the adored wife arose, with the laughter of his blue eyes, to make his heart beat as if to burst, in the belief that the dead woman was resuscitated. He struck his breast with his fist and sobbed in inefficacious penitence, exclaiming that the priesthood should be forbidden to those who have been married and have preserved ties of blood from wedlock.

The good Abbé Cornille had spoken of this to Hubertine in a very low tone and with trembling hands. Mysterious rumors were in circulation, it was whispered that Monseigneur shut himself up when twilight came

on; and there were nights of combat, of tears and of groans, the violence of which, stifled by the hangings, terrified the bishop's house. He believed he had forgotten, tamed his passion; but it had sprung up again with the fury of a tempest in the terrible man he formerly was, the man of adventure, the descendant of the legendary captains. Every evening, upon his knees, his skin torn by a hair shirt, he strove to drive away the phantom of the regretted wife, evoked from the coffin the dust which she must now be. And it was living that she arose, in her delicious freshness of a flower, such as he had loved her, wholly young, with the mad love of a man already mature. The torture recommenced, as fearful as on the day after her death; he wept for her, he wished for her, with the same revolt against God, who had taken her from him; he grew calm only at dawn, exhausted, feeling contempt for himself and disgust for the world. Ah! passion, that evil thing, which he would like to crush in order to fall back into the annihilating peace of divine love!

Monseigneur, when he emerged from his chamber, had recovered his severe attitude, his calm and haughty face, hardly whitened by a remnant of pallor. When Félicien had made his confession, he had listened to him without a word, controlling himself with such an effort that not a fibre of his flesh quivered. He had looked at him, his heart wrung to see him so youthful, so handsome and so ardent, to behold himself again in that madness of love. It was no longer animosity, it was the absolute wish, the rough duty to withdraw him from the evil from which he himself had suffered so much. He

would kill passion in his son as he desired to kill it in himself. This romantic tale completed his anguish. What! a poor girl, a girl without a name, a little embroiderer perceived beneath a ray of moonlight, transfigured into a slender virgin of the Legend, adored with a mad love in a dream! And he had finally answered with a single word: "Never!" Félicien had cast himself at his knees, imploring him, pleading his cause and that of Angélique in a quiver of respect and terror. Until then he had not approached him without trembling; he supplicated him not to oppose his happiness, without even yet daring to raise his eyes to his holy person. In a submissive voice he offered to disappear, to take his wife so far away that they would never be seen again, to abandon his great fortune to the Church. He wished only to be loved and love, unknown. A quiver, then, had shaken Monseigneur. His word was pledged to the Voincourts, never would he take it back. And Félicien, exhausted, feeling rage coming upon him, had gone away, afraid of the rush of blood which had empurpled his cheeks and which urged him to the sacrilege of an open rebellion.

"My child," concluded Hubertine, "you see clearly that you must think no more of that young man, for you, doubtless, do not count on acting against Monseigneur's will. I foresaw all this. But I prefer that the facts shall speak and that the obstacle shall not come from me."

Angélique had listened with her tranquil air, her hands fallen and clasped upon her knees. Scarcely had her eyelids quivered now and then, her fixed glances

beheld the scene, Félicien at Monseigneur's feet, speaking of her in an overflow of tenderness. She did not answer at once, she continued to reflect amid the dead calm of the kitchen, in which the little hum of the boiler had died away. She lowered her eyelids, she looked at her hands which the light of the lamp made beautiful ivory. Then, while her smile of invincible confidence remounted to her lips, she merely said:

"If Monseigneur refuses, it is because he is waiting to become acquainted with me."

That night Angélique slept but little. The idea that the sight of her would decide Monseigneur haunted her. And there was no woman's personal vanity in this, she felt that love was all-powerful, she loved Félicien so much that it would certainly be seen and the father could not persist in making them miserable. Twenty times she turned in her huge bed, repeating these things to herself. Monseigneur passed before her closed eyes, with his violet robe. Perhaps it was through him and by him that the expected miracle would be worked. The warm night slept without, she lent an ear to listen to the voices, to try to surprise the advice given her by the trees, the Chevrotte, the cathedral, her chamber itself, peopled by friendly shades. But everything hummed, nothing precise reached her. She grew impatient at the too tardy certitude. And, as she fell asleep, she surprised herself saying:

"To-morrow, I will speak to Monseigneur."

When she awoke, her step appeared to her very simple and necessary. Hers was an ingenuous and brave passion, a great, proud purity in bravery.

She knew that, every Saturday, towards five o'clock in the evening, Monseigneur went to kneel in the Haute-cœur Chapel, where he loved to pray in solitude, plunged in the past of his race and of himself, seeking isolation respected by his entire clergy; and it happened to be Saturday. She quickly made a decision. At the bishop's house, perhaps, she would not be received; besides, people were always there, she would be troubled; while it was so easy to wait in the chapel and tell Monseigneur her name as soon as he should appear. That day, she embroidered with her accustomed application and serenity: she had no excitement, resolute in her will, certain that she was doing right. Then, at four o'clock, she spoke of going to see Mère Gabet, she went out, clad as for her walks in the vicinity, wearing a simple garden hat, tied by careless fingers. She turned to the left and pushed open the padded door, which, with a dull sound, fell back behind her.

The church was empty, a confessional of the Saint Joseph Chapel alone was yet occupied by a female penitent of whom only the black skirt was visible; and Angélique, very calm until then, began to tremble on entering that sacred and cold solitude, where the slight noise of her footsteps appeared to her to resound terribly. Why was her heart thus oppressed? She had believed herself so strong, she had passed such a tranquil day in the idea of her perfect right to wish to be happy! And now she no longer knew anything, she grew pale like a guilty creature! She glided as far as the Haute-cœur Chapel and there was forced to support herself against the grating.

This chapel was one of the most buried, one of the most sombre of the antique Twelfth Century arch. Like a cavern cut in the rock, narrow and bare, with the simple raised mouldings of its low vault, it was lighted only by the stained glass window, the legend of Saint George, in which the red and blue glasses, dominating, made a lilac, crepuscular illumination. The altar, in white and black marble, devoid of ornament, with its Christ and its double pairs of candlesticks, resembled a sepulchre. And the remainder of the walls was covered with tombstones, a whole imbedding from top to bottom of stones gnawed by age, upon which the inscriptions in deep letters could yet be red.

Stifling, Angélique awaited, motionless. A beadle passed, who did not even see her, clinging to the interior of that grating. She still perceived the skirt of the penitent overflowing from the confessional. Her eyes, habituated to the half-light, fixed themselves mechanically upon the inscriptions, the characters of which she finally deciphered. Names struck her, awoke in her the legends of the Château d'Hauteceur, Jean V., the Great, Raoul III., Hervé VII. She encountered two others, those of Laurette and Balbine, which moved her to tears in her trouble. They were those of the Happy Dead, Laurette fallen from a ray of moonlight on going to rejoin her betrothed, Balbine slain with joy by the return of her husband, whom she had believed killed in the war, both of them coming back at night, enveloping the Château with the white flight of their immense robes. Had she not seen them, on the day of her visit to the ruins, floating above the towers, amid the pale

ashen twilight? Ah! she would have willingly died like them, at sixteen, in the supreme happiness of her realized dream!

A tremendous noise, sent back beneath the vaults, made her start. It was the priest who had come out of the confessional of the Saint Joseph Chapel and had shut the door after him. She experienced surprise on missing the penitent, who had already vanished. Then, when the priest, in his turn, had gone into the sacristy, she felt herself absolutely alone in the vast solitude of the church. At that thundering noise of the old confessional cracking in its rusty ironwork, she had believed that Monseigneur was approaching. She had been waiting for him nearly half an hour and had not realized it, her emotion had borne away the minutes.

But a new name arrested her eyes, Félicien III., the one who went to Palestine, with a wax candle in his hand, to fulfil a vow of Philippe le Bel. And her heart thumped, she saw arise the youthful head of Félicien VII., the descendant of all of them, the blonde seigneur whom she adored and by whom she was adored. She was bewildered by pride and fear. Was it possible that she was there for the accomplishment of the prodigy? In front of her was a more recent slab of marble, dating from the last century, upon which she easily read, in black letters: Norbert, Louis, Ogier, Marquis d'Hautecœur, Prince de Mirande and de Rouvres, Comte de Ferrières, de Montégu, de Saint-Marc and also de Villemareuil, Baron de Combeville, Chevalier of the four orders of the king, Lieutenant of his armies, Governor of Normandy and incumbent of the post of Captain Gen-

eral of the Deer Hunt and of the Equipage of the Wild Boar. They were the titles of Félicien's grandfather; she had come, so common, with her workgirl's dress, her fingers pricked by the needle, to wed the grandson of that dead man.

There was a slight sound, scarcely a touch upon the slabs of the floor. She turned and saw Monseigneur, and was amazed at his silent approach, without the crash of thunder which she had expected. He had entered the chapel, very tall, very noble, clad wholly in violet, with his pale face, somewhat large nose and superb still youthful eyes. At first, he did not perceive her, against that black grating. Then, as he bent towards the altar, he found her in front of him, at his feet.

With bending limbs, overwhelmed by respect and terror, Angélique had sunk upon both knees. He appeared to her like God the Father, terrible, the absolute master of her destiny. But she had a courageous heart, she spoke immediately.

"Oh! Monseigneur, I have come——"

He drew himself up. He vaguely remembered her: the young girl he had noticed at her window on the day of the procession, whom he had again seen in the church, standing upon a chair, that little embroiderer about whom his son was wild. He uttered not a word, made not a gesture. Lofty and rigid, he waited.

"Oh! Monseigneur, I have come that you might see me. You have refused me, but you did not know me. And behold me, look at me before repulsing me again. I am she who loves and is beloved, and nothing else

nothing outside of that love, nothing but a poor child, picked up at the door of this church. You see me at your feet—how insignificant, weak and humble I am. It will be easy for you to put me aside, if I embarrass you. You have but to lift a finger to destroy me. But how many tears I have shed! What one suffers must be known. Then, people are full of pity. I have decided, in my turn, to defend my cause, Monseigneur. I am an ignorant girl, I only know that I love and am loved. Does not that suffice—to love, to love and to say so!”

And she continued in broken and panting phrases, she confessed everything in a burst of frankness, of growing passion. It was love speaking. She dared to do this because she was pure. Little by little, she had raised her head.

“We love each other, Monseigneur. He, no doubt, has explained to you how that happened. I have often asked myself the question without succeeding in answering it. We love each other, and, if it is a crime, pardon it, for it came from afar, from the very trees and stones which surrounded us. When I knew that I loved him, it was too late to love him no longer. Now, is it possible to condemn that? You can keep him away from me, marry him to some one else, but you cannot prevent him from loving me. He will die without me, as I will die without him. When he is not beside me, I plainly feel that he is there yet, that we no longer separate, that one bears away the heart of the other. I have but to close my eyes to see him again, he is one with me. There is not a drop of our blood which is not thus mingled for life. And you would tear us from that union?

Monseigneur, it is divine—do not prevent us from loving each other.”

He looked at her, so fresh, so simple, of the odor of a bouquet, in her little workgirl's dress. He heard her tell the tale of her love in a voice of troubling sweetness, gradually growing firmer. But the garden hat slipped upon her shoulders, her hair of light glorified her visage with fine gold; and she seemed to him like one of those legendary virgins of the ancient missals, with something faint, primitive, devoutly rapturous in passion, something passionately pure.

“Be kind, Monseigneur. You are the master, make us happy.”

She implored him, again bent her forehead, on beholding him so cold, still without a word, without a gesture. Ah! that bewildered child at his feet, that odor of youth which exhaled from the nape of her neck bent before him! There, he again saw the little blonde locks, so madly kissed in the past. She whose remembrance was torturing him, after twenty years of penitence, had that odorous youth, that neck of the pride and grace of the lily. She was born again, it was she who was sobbing there, who was fervently supplicating him to be tender to passion.

The tears had come; nevertheless, Angélique continued, wishing to tell everything.

“And, Monseigneur, it is not he alone that I love, I love besides the nobility of his name, the splendor of his royal fortune. Yes, I know that, being nothing, possessing nothing, I have the air of wanting him for his money; and it is true, it is also for his money that I

want him. I tell you this, since it is necessary that you should know me. Ah! to become rich through him, with him, to live in the sweetness and splendor of luxury, to owe him all the joys, to be free in our love, no longer to leave tears and poverty around us! Since he has loved me, I have seen myself clad in brocade as in the old times; I have had about my neck, on my wrists, masses of gems and pearls; I have had horses, carriages, vast groves in which to promenade on foot, followed by pages. Never do I think of him without recommencing this dream; and I say to myself that this ought to be, he has fulfilled my desire to be a queen. Monseigneur, is it then base to love him, more because he will realize all my childish wishes, the miraculous showers of gold of the fairy tales, of which I have read so much?"

He beheld her drawn up proudly, with her charming grand air of a princess, in her simplicity. And it was, indeed, the other, the same delicacy of a flower, the same tender tears, as bright as smiles. An intoxicating influence emanated from her, the warm quiver of which he felt mount to his face, that same quiver so strongly remembered which cast him, at night, sobbing upon his praying cushion, troubling with his groans the religious silence of the bishop's house. The day before, until three o'clock in the morning, he had struggled; and this love affair, this passion thus stirred up, irritated his incurable wound. But, behind his impassibility, nothing appeared, nothing betrayed the effort of the strife to tame the throbbing of his heart. If he lost his blood drop by drop, no person saw it flow: he was

only paler, sterner, and more persistently silent because of it.

Then, this stern, obstinate silence filled Angélique with despair; she redoubled her supplications.

"I put myself in your hands, Monseigneur. Have pity, decide my fate."

And yet he did not speak, he terrified her, as if he had grown taller before her, of a formidable majesty. The deserted cathedral, with its already sombre lateral naves and its lofty arches where the light was fading increased still more the anguish of waiting. In the chapel even the tombstones could no longer be distinguished, he alone remained, with his violet soutane, become dark, his long white face the only object which seemed to have kept the light. She saw his eyes glisten, fasten themselves upon her with a growing brilliancy. Was it anger which was brightening them in that manner?

"Monseigneur, if I had not come, I should have eternally reproached myself with having caused our misfortune from lack of courage. Say, I entreat you, say that I have done right, that you consent."

What was the good of arguing with that child? He had given his son the reasons for his refusal, that was sufficient. If he did not speak it was because he believed that he had nothing to say. She understood this without doubt, she strove to raise herself to his hands to kiss them. But he violently thrust them behind him; and she grew frightened on noticing that his pale face had become empurpled with a sudden rush of blood.

“ Monseigneur—Monseigneur ! ”

At last, he opened his lips, he said to her a simple word, the word cast at his son :

“ Never ! ”

And, without even making his devotions that day, he departed. His solemn footsteps were lost behind the pillars of the arch.

Angélique fell upon the slabs of the floor and wept for a long while, with great sobs, amid the immense silence of the empty church.

CHAPTER XI.

ANGÉLIQUE'S DESPAIR.

THAT evening, in the kitchen, on quitting table, Angélique confessed to the Huberts, told them of her interview with the bishop and the latter's refusal. She was excessively pale, but very calm.

Hubert was upset. What! his dear child was suffering already! She also was stricken to the heart! His eyes filled with tears in his passionate sympathy with her, that excitement of the beyond which carried them off so easily together at the slightest breath.

"Ah! my poor dear, why did you not consult me? I would have gone with you and perhaps would have bent Monseigneur."

With a look Hubertine silenced him. He was really unreasonable. Was it not better to seize the occasion to bury this impossible marriage? She took the young girl in her arms and kissed her tenderly on the forehead.

"Then, it's done with, pet, entirely done with?"

Angélique, at first, did not seem to understand. Then, the words returned to her from afar. She looked straight in front of her, as if she had interrogated space, and replied:

"Without doubt, mother."

In fact, the next day, she seated herself at her frame and embroidered with her habitual air. Her former life was resumed and she did not appear to suffer. Besides,

she made no allusion, did not cast a glance towards the window and scarcely kept a remnant of pallor. The sacrifice seemed accomplished.

Hubert himself believed so, yielded to Hubertine's wisdom and strove to keep away Félicien, who, not yet daring to rebel against his father, grew so excited as not to observe the promise he had made to wait, without trying to see Angélique again. He wrote to her and the letters were intercepted. He presented himself one morning, and it was Hubert who received him. The explanation distressed them equally, such pain did the young man show when the embroiderer told him of his daughter's growing calmness, at the same time begging him to be loyal and disappear in order not to throw her back into the frightful trouble of the last month. Félicien bound himself anew to be patient, but violently refused to take back his word: he still hoped to convince his father. He would wait, he would leave things as they were with the Voincourts, with whom he dined twice a week, his sole aim being to avoid an open rebellion. And, as he was going away, he supplicated Hubert to explain to Angélique why he consented to the torment of not seeing her: he thought only of her, all his acts had no other design than to win her.

Hubertine, when her husband reported this interview to her, grew grave. Then, after a period of silence, she asked:

"Will you repeat to the child what he has charged you to tell her?"

"I ought to do so."

She looked at him fixedly and then declared,

"Act according to your conscience. But he deceives himself: in the end he will yield to his father's will and that will kill our poor dear little girl."

Hubert, thus opposed, full of anguish, hesitated and then resigned himself to repeat nothing. Besides, he daily grew a little reassured when his wife called his attention to Angélique's tranquil attitude.

"You see that the wound is closing. She is forgetting."

She was not forgetting, she was simply waiting. All human hope was dead and she had returned to the idea of a prodigy. One would surely be produced, if God desired her to be happy. She had only to abandon herself in His hands; she believed herself punished by this new trial for having essayed to force His will by importuning Monseigneur. Without the grace, the creature was weak, incapable of victory. Her need of the grace brought her back to humility, to the only hope of aid from the invisible, no longer acting, leaving action to the mysterious forces scattered around her. She recommenced, every evening, beneath the lamp, to read her antique copy of "The Golden Legend;" she was delighted with it, as in the innocence of her childhood, and did not doubt a single miracle, convinced that the power of the unknown is without limit for the triumph of pure souls.

Just at this time the upholsterer of the cathedral gave the Huberts an order for a pannel of very rich embroidery for Monseigneur's episcopal chair. This pannel, a mètre and a half wide and three in height, was to be enframed in the woodwork of the back and to contain a

representation of two angels of natural size, holding a crown, beneath which was to be the coat-of-arms of the Hauteceurs. It necessitated embroidery in bas-relief, work which demands much art and a great expenditure of physical strength. The Huberts, at first, had refused, afraid of fatiguing Angélique and, above all, of saddening her by causing her to embroider that coat-of-arms, over which, thread by thread, for weeks, she would revive her remembrances. But she had angrily insisted upon filling the order, and every morning she resumed work on the pannel with extraordinary energy. It seemed that she was delighted to weary herself, that she had need of bruising her body in order to be calm.

And the life in the antique work-room continued, always the same and regular, as if the hearts there had not for a moment beaten more rapidly than usual. While Hubert busied himself with the frames, designed, stretched and loosened, Hubertine aided Angélique, both of them having bruised fingers when evening came on. For the angels and ornaments it had been necessary to divide each subject into several parts, which were treated separately. Angélique, in order to represent the great projections, guided with a knitting-needle heavy *écru* threads, which she covered in an opposite direction with Bretagne threads; and, gradually, using a *menne-lourd* as well as a *hatchel*, she shaped those threads, made the draperies of the angels stand out and detached the details of the ornaments. It was a real work of sculpture. Afterwards, when the form was obtained, Hubertine and she cast on threads of gold, which they sewed with osier splints. It was wholly a golden bas-

relief, of an incomparable softness and brilliancy, shining like a sun in the midst of the smoked apartment. The old implements were arranged in their ancient order, the nipping-tools, punches, mallets and hammers; over the frames trotted the bourriquet and the pâté, the thimbles and the needles; and, in the depths of the corners where they were rusting, the diligent, the hand spinning wheel and the reel with its winches appeared to be slumbering, drowsy in the great quietude which came in through the open windows.

Days elapsed. Angélique broke needles from morning till evening, so difficult was it to sew the gold through the thickness of the waxed threads. She seemed wholly absorbed, body and mind, by this heavy work, to the point of no longer thinking. At nine o'clock, she was overcome with fatigue, went to bed and slept a leaden sleep. When toil left her brain free for a minute, she was astonished at not seeing Félicien. If she did nothing to meet him, she thought that he ought to surmount everything to get to her. But she commended him for displaying such wisdom, she would have scolded him had he wished to hasten matters. Without doubt, he also was waiting for the prodigy. It was the sole expectation in which she now lived, hoping every evening that it would be realized on the morrow. She had not rebelled until then. Sometimes, however, she had raised her head: what, nothing yet? And she strongly drove in her needle, which made her little hands bleed. Often, she was forced to draw it out with the pincers. When the needle broke, with the hollow sound of cracking glass, she did not even show impatience.

Hubertine grew uneasy at seeing her so eagerly bent upon her work, and, as the time for the lye washing had arrived, she compelled her to quit the pannel of embroidery that she might spend four good days of active life beneath the glowing sunlight. Mère Gabet, whose pains had given her a respite, was able to assist in the soaping and rinsing. It was a jollification in the Clos-Marie; that close of August had an admirable splendor, an ardent sky and dark shadows; while a delicious coolness exhaled from the Chevrotte, the rapid waters of which were made icy by the shade of the willows. And Angélique passed the first day very gayly, beating and plunging in the linen, enjoying the brook, the elms, the ruined mill and the grass, all those friendly things, so full of memories. Was it not there that she had become acquainted with Félicien, at first mysterious beneath the moonlight, then so adorably awkward the morning he had saved the fleeing camisole? After rinsing each piece, she could not avoid casting a glance towards the grating of the bishop's house, nailed up in the past: she had passed through it one evening on his arm, perhaps he would suddenly open it to come for her and lead her to his father's knees. This hope lent enchantment to her rough work amid the splashes of the suds.

But, the next day, as Mère Gabet brought the last wheelbarrow load of linen, which she spread out with Angélique, she interrupted her interminable chatter to say without evil intent:

“Of course, you know that Monseigneur is going to marry off his son?”

The young girl, who was spreading a sheet, knelt in the grass, her heart sinking beneath the shock.

"Yes, everybody is talking about it. Monseigneur's son will wed Mademoiselle de Voincourt in the autumn. Everything was settled day before yesterday it appears."

She remained upon her knees, a flood of confused ideas buzzed in her head. The news did not surprise her, she felt that it was true. Her mother had warned her, she should have expected it. But, at that first moment, what entirely overwhelmed her was the thought that, trembling before his father, Félicien might marry the other, without loving her, some evening when he was wholly fagged out. Then, he would be lost to her, whom he adored. Never had she thought of that possible weakness, she saw him yielding to duty, causing, in the name of obedience, their mutual misfortune. And, without stirring yet, her eyes turned towards the grating, rebellion at last broke out in her, the need of going to shake its bars, of opening it with her nails, of running to him and of sustaining him with her courage that he might not yield.

She was surprised to hear herself reply to Mère Gabet, with the purely mechanical instinct of hiding her trouble.

"Ah! it's Mademoiselle Claire whom he is going to marry. She is very beautiful and, they say, very good."

Surely, as soon as the old woman had gone, she would go to him. She had waited long enough, she would break her oath not to see him again as a troublesome obstacle. By what right did they separate them thus?

Everything cried out her love to her, the cathedral, the cool water, the old elms amid which they had loved each other. Since their tenderness had sprung up there, it was there that she wished to get him back that she might flee, twined about his neck, very far away, so far that nevermore would they be found again.

"That's all," finally said Mère Gabet, as she hung the last napkins on a bush. "In a couple of hours everything will be dry. Good-evening, Mademoiselle, since you have no further use for me."

Now, standing amid that bloom of linen, bright upon the green grass, Angélique thought of that other day when, in the high wind, while the sheets and table-cloths were flapping, their hearts had been so frankly given to each other. Why had he ceased to come to see her? Why was he not at this rendezvous, amid the healthy gayety of the lye wash? But, presently, when she should hold him in her arms, she knew well enough that he would belong to her alone. She would not even need to reproach him with his weakness, she had merely to appear before him and he would recover the will power necessary for their happiness. He would dare everything, she had only to rejoin him in an instant.

An hour passed away, and Angélique was walking with slackened steps among the linen, all white herself, with the blinding reflection of the sun, and a confused voice had been raised within her, had swelled and had prevented her from going to the grating. She was frightened by this commencing struggle. What! was there nothing in her but her will? Another thing, which had been put there without doubt, opposed her

and overthrew the pure simplicity of her passion. It was so simple to run to the person one loves, and already she could not do it, the torment of doubt held her; she had sworn, so it would perhaps be very wicked. In the evening, when the wash was dry and Hubertine came to assist her to carry it in, she gave herself the night for reflection. Her arms filled to overflowing with the snowy linen, which had a delightful odor, she cast an uneasy glance at the Clos-Marie, already obscured by the twilight, as at a corner of friendly nature refusing to be an accomplice.

On the morrow Angélique awoke full of trouble. Other nights passed without bringing her a resolution. She recovered her calmness only in her certainty of being beloved. That had remained unshaken, she relied upon it divinely. Beloved, she could wait, she would bear everything. Fits of charity had again seized on her, she was affected by the slightest sufferings, her eyes swollen with tears always on the point of gushing forth. Père Mascart received tobacco, the Chouteaus even got sweetmeats out of her. But the Lemballeuses particularly profited by the windfall; Tiennette had been seen dancing at the fêtes in one of the kind young lady's dresses. And it chanced that, one day, as Angélique was bringing to Mère Lemballeuse some camisoles promised the day before, she perceived, from a distance, at the mendicants' house, Madame de Voincourt and her daughter Claire, accompanied by Félicien. The latter, without doubt, had brought them. She did not let them see her, she returned, her heart frozen. Two days later, she saw them all three go to the Chouteaus'; then, one morning,

Père Mascart told her of a visit of the handsome young man with two ladies. After that she abandoned her poor, who were no longer hers, since, after having taken them from her, Félicien had given them to those women; she ceased to go out, afraid of encountering them again, of receiving that wound in her heart the pain of which penetrated deeper; and she felt that something was dying in her, her life was ebbing away drop by drop.

One evening, after one of those meetings, alone in her chamber, stifling with anguish, she let this cry escape from her:

“He loves me no longer!”

She again saw Claire de Voincourt, tall and beautiful, with her crown of black hair; and she again saw him, beside her, slender and haughty. Were they not made for each other, of the same race, so well-matched that one might have believed them already married?

“He loves me no longer, he loves me no longer!”

This burst out within her with a great noise of destruction. Her faith shaken, everything crumbled, and she could not recover sufficient calmness to examine, to coldly discuss the facts. She believed the day before, she no longer believed at this hour: a breath, come from she knew not where, had sufficed; and, at a stroke, she had fallen to the extremity of misery, which is not to believe one's self beloved. He had told her in the past that it was the only grief, the abominable torture. Until then she had been able to resign herself, she had expected the miracle. But her strength had left her with her faith, she felt the distress of a child. And the painful struggle began.

At first, she made an appeal to her pride: so much the better if he loved her no longer, for she was too proud to love him further. And she lied to herself, she affected to be delivered, to hum carelessly while she embroidered the coat-of-arms of the Hauteceurs to which she had applied herself. But her heart swelled so that it almost stifled her, she had the shame of confessing to herself that she was base enough to love him still, to love him more. During a week, the coat-of-arms, as it grew thread by thread beneath her fingers, filled her with a frightful melancholy. Quartered, one and four, two and three, of Jerusalem and of Hauteceur; of Jerusalem, which is of silver with the cross of gold with cross-pieces at either end, stationed with four little crosses of the same; of Hauteceur, which is of azure with the fortress of gold, with an escutcheon of sable with a heart of silver in the centre, the whole accompanied by three fleurs de lys of gold, two at the top and one at the bottom. The enamels were made of silk twist, the metals of gold and silver thread. What misery to feel her hand tremble, to lower her head in order to hide her eyes which the splendor of this coat-of-arms blinded with tears! She thought only of him, she adored him in the brilliancy of his legendary nobility. And when she embroidered the device, "If God wishes, I wish," in black silk upon a streamer of silver, she fully comprehended that she was his slave, that nevermore would she free herself: her tears prevented her from seeing, while, mechanically, she continued to drive the needle.

Then, it was pitiful. Angélique loved desperately and struggled with that hopeless love which she could not

kill. Constantly she wished to run to Félicien, to reconquer him by casting herself upon his neck; and constantly the battle recommenced. Sometimes she believed she had won the victory, there was a great silence within her, it seemed to her that she saw herself, as she would have seen a stranger, very small, very cold, kneeling like an obedient daughter in the humility of renunciation: it was no longer she, it was the wise daughter she had become, that the surroundings and education had made. Then, a flow of blood mounted and stunned her; her fine health and ardent youth galloped like escaped mares; and she found herself again with her pride and her passion, altogether given over to the fierce obscurity of her origin. Why should she have obeyed? There was no duty, there was only free will. Already she was preparing for her flight and calculating the favorable hour to force the grating of the garden of the bishop's house. But already also the anguish had returned, a dull uneasiness, the torment of doubt. If she yielded to evil, she would have eternal remorse. Hours, abominable hours passed in the midst of this uncertainty as to what course to take, beneath this tempestuous wind which incessantly cast her back from the rebellion of her love to the horror of the fault. And she came out weakened by each victory over her heart.

One evening, at the moment of quitting the house to rejoin Félicien, she thought suddenly of her assisted infant's book in her distress at no longer finding the strength to resist her passion. She took it from the depths of the trunk, turned over the leaves and scourged herself at every page with the meanness of her birth,

hungering with an ardent need for humility. Father and mother unknown, no name, nothing but a date and a number, the abandonment of the wild plant which springs up at the edge of the road! And her remembrances arose in a throng, the rich meadows of the Nièvre, the domestic animals she had watched there, the flat road of Soulanges, where she had walked barefooted, Mamma Nini who used to strike her when she stole apples. Certain pages particularly awakened her recollections, those which bore witness, every three months, to the visits of the under-inspector and the physician, signatures, accompanied sometimes with observations and information: a malady of which she had come near dying, a claim of her nurse for burnt shoes, bad notes for her unruly character. It was the journal of her misery. But one entry brought the tears to her eyes, the statement establishing the breaking of the necklace which she had worn until she was six years old. She remembered having instinctively execrated it, that necklace composed of bone olives, strung on a silken cord and fastened with a silver medal, bearing the date of her entrance and her number. She considered it the collar of a slave, she would have broken it with her little hands, had not the fear of the consequences restrained her. Then, having grown older, she had complained that it was strangling her. For a year longer it had been left on her. Hence what joy when the under-inspector had cut the cord in the presence of the Mayor of the Commune, replacing that mark of individuality by a formal description, in which were already her violet-hued eyes and her fine golden locks! And, nevertheless, she still felt it about her neck, that collar

of a domestic animal, which one marks in order to recognize it: it remained in her flesh, she was stifling. That day, at that page, humility returned, frightful, and caused her to go up again to her chamber, sobbing, unworthy of being loved. Two other times the book saved her. Afterwards, she was powerless against her revolts.

Now, it was at night that the crisis of temptation tormented her. Before going to bed, to purify her sleep, she forced herself to re-read the Legend. But, with her forehead between her two hands, despite her efforts, she no longer understood: the miracles stupefied her, she perceived only a colorless flight of phantoms. Then, in her vast bed, after a leaden annihilation, a sudden anguish awakened her with a start amid the darkness. She straightened herself up, bewildered, knelt among the thrown-off coverings, sweat on her temples, shaken all over with a quiver; and she clasped her hands, and she stammered: "My God, why hast Thou abandoned me?" For her distress was at feeling herself alone, at those moments, in the gloom. She had dreamed of Félicien, she trembled to dress herself, to go and rejoin him, while no one was there to prevent her. It was the grace which was withdrawing from her, God had ceased to be about her, the surroundings had abandoned her. Desperately, she called upon the unknown, she lent her ear to the invisible. And the air was empty, no more whispering voices, no more mysterious touches. Everything seemed dead: the Clos-Marie, with the Chevrotte, the willows, the grass, the elms of the bishop's house, and the cathedral itself. Nothing remained of the dreams which she

had placed there, the white flight of the virgins, in vanishing, had left only the sepulchre of things. She agonized with powerlessness, disarmed, like a Christian of the primitive Church overwhelmed by hereditary sin as soon as the aid of the supernatural ceased. In the sad silence of this protecting corner, she heard it born again and howl, that heredity of evil, triumphant over the education received. If, in two minutes more, no aid came to her from the unknown forces, if things did not awake and sustain her, she would certainly succumb, she would go to her destruction. "My God, my God, why hast Thou abandoned me?" And, on her knees in the midst of her vast bed, so small and so delicate, she felt that she was dying.

Then, every time, up to the present, at the minute of her extreme distress, a coolness had relieved her. It was the grace which had pity, which had entered into her to restore her illusion. She leaped barefooted upon the floor of the chamber, she ran to the window with a great bound; and there she heard anew the voices, invisible wings grazed her hair, the people of the Legend emerged from the trees and the stones and surrounded her in a throng. Her purity, her kindness, all that there was of her in the things there, returned to her and saved her. Henceforward, she was no longer afraid, she knew that she was guarded: Agnes had returned, in company with the virgins, wandering and tender in the quivering air. It was a distant encouragement, a long murmur of victory which reached her, mixed with the wind of the night. For an hour she breathed this calming mildness, mortally sad, strengthened in her will to die rather than

fail to keep her oath. At last, broken, she returned to bed, she went to sleep again with the fear of the crisis of the morrow, still tormented with the idea that she would ultimately succumb if she weakened thus every time.

Languor, in fact, had been exhausting Angélique ever since she had no longer believed herself beloved by Félicien. She had the wound in her side, she was dying of it somewhat each hour, mute, without a complaint. At first, this was evidenced by fits of lassitude: a difficulty in breathing seized upon her, she was compelled to drop her thread, remained for a minute with pale eyes lost in space. Then, she had ceased to eat, scarcely a few mouthfuls of milk; and she hid her bread, cast it to the neighbors' chickens in order not to make her parents uneasy. A physician was summoned, but discovered nothing, said it was the too cloistered life and contented himself with recommending exercise. It was a swooning of her entire being, a slow disappearance. Her body floated as if poised on two huge wings, light seemed to come from her thin face where her soul was burning. And she had reached the point of no longer coming down from her chamber save in leaning with both hands against the walls of the stairway and staggering. But she persisted, put on a brave air as soon as she felt herself observed, wishing, in spite of all, to finish the panel of difficult embroidery for Monseigneur's chair. Her long little hands no longer had the strength, and when she broke a needle she could not draw it out with the pincers.

Now, one morning when Hubert and Hubertine, forced

to go out, had left her alone at work, the embroiderer, who was the first to return, found her on the floor; she had slipped from her chair and fainted, overcome in front of the frame. She had succumbed at the task, one of the great golden angels remained unfinished. Upset, Hubert took her in his arms and strove to stand her on her feet. But she fell back, she did not awake from this annihilation.

“My dear, my dear! In pity, answer me!”

Finally, she opened her eyes and looked at him sadly. Why did he wish her to live? She was so happy dead!

“What ails you, my dear? So you have deceived us, you love him still?”

She did not answer, she looked at him with her air of immense sadness. Then, with a desperate clasp, he lifted her up, carried her to her chamber; and, when he had placed her upon the bed, so white, so feeble, he wept at the cruel deed he had done in keeping from her the man she loved.

“I would have given you to him! Why did you say nothing to me?”

But she did not speak, her eyelids closed again and she seemed to fall asleep once more. He had remained standing, his eyes upon her thin lily face, his heart bleeding with pity. Then, as she breathed freely, he went downstairs on hearing his wife return.

Below, in the workroom, the explanation took place. Hubertine had just removed her hat, and immediately he told her that he had picked up the child there, that she was dozing in her bed, stricken to death.

“We are deceived. She still thinks of that young

man, and she is dying because of him. Ah ! if you knew the shock I have received, the remorse which has torn me, since I have understood and carried her up-stairs in such a pitiful state ! It is our fault, we have separated them by lies. What ? you would let her suffer, you would not say anything to save her ! ”

Hubertine, like Angélique, was silent, looked at him with her great reasonable air, pale with trouble. And he, the passionate one whom this suffering passion threw out of his habitual submission, did not calm himself, but shook his feverish hands.

“ Well, I will speak ! I will tell her that Félicien loves her, that we had the cruelty to prevent him from returning by deceiving him also. Each one of her tears, now, burns my heart. It would be a murder of which I should feel myself the accomplice. I want her to be happy, yes, happy, no matter what happens, by any means ! ”

He had drawn nearer to his wife, he dared to cry out his rebellious tenderness, irritating himself further with the sad silence which she preserved.

“ Since they love each other, they are the masters ! There is nothing beyond, when one loves and is beloved. Yes, by any means, happiness is legitimate. ”

Finally, Hubertine spoke, in her slow voice, standing motionless.

“ Let him take her from us, let him marry her in spite of us, in spite of his father, eh ? That is the advice you give them ; you believe that they will be happy afterwards, that love will suffice ! ”

And, in the same wounded tone, she continued :

“As I was returning, I passed the cemetery, a hope made me enter there again. I knelt once more on that spot worn by our knees, and I prayed there for a long while.”

Hubert had turned pale, a cold shiver had carried off his fever. Certainly, he knew it, the tomb of the obstinate mother, where they had gone so often to weep and to submit, while accusing themselves of their disobedience, in order that the dead woman might show them mercy from the depths of the soil. And they had remained there for hours, certain of feeling that mercy bloom within them, if ever she accorded it to them. What they demanded was another child, a child of pardon, the sole sign by which they would know themselves forgiven at last. But nothing had come, the cold and deaf mother left them beneath the inexorable punishment, the death of their first child, which she had taken and borne away, which she refused to restore to them.

“I prayed for a long while,” repeated Hubertine, “I listened to hear if anything gave a start.”

Anxiously, Hubert questioned her with a look.

“And nothing, no, nothing mounted from the ground, nothing gave a start within me. Ah! it is done, it is too late, we have brought our misfortune upon us.”

Then, he trembled and asked: “Do you accuse me?”

“Yes, you are the guilty one, I also committed the fault in following you. We have disobeyed and our whole life has been spoiled by it.”

“And you are not happy?”

“No, I am not happy. A woman who has no child is not happy. To love is nothing, the love must be blest.”

He had fallen upon a chair, weakening, his eyes big with tears. Never had she thus reproached him with the living sore of their existence; and she, who had returned so quickly and consoled him when she had wounded him by an involuntary allusion, this time watched him suffer, still standing, without a movement, without a step towards him. He wept, he cried out in the midst of his tears:

“Ah! the dear child up-stairs, it is she whom you condemn! You do not want him to marry her as I married you that she may suffer what you have suffered.”

She responded with a nod of the head, simply, in all the strength and simplicity of her heart.

“But you have said yourself that the poor dear girl will die of it. Do you wish her death?”

“Yes, her death rather than an unhappy life!”

He arose, quivering, he sought refuge in her arms, and both of them sobbed. For a long time they clasped each other. He submitted; she, now, was compelled to lean on his shoulder in order to recover sufficient courage. They came out of this desperate and resolved, shut up in a great and poignant silence, at the end of which, if God willed it, was the consented to death of the child.

From that day Angélique was forced to remain in her chamber. Her weakness became such that she could not come down to the workroom: immediately her head turned, her limbs gave way beneath her. At first, she walked, traveled as far as the balcony by aiding herself with the furniture. Then, she had to content herself with going from her bed to her arm-chair. The journey was long, she risked it only morning and evening, ex-

hausted. Nevertheless, she still worked, abandoning the too difficult embroidery in bas-relief, embroidering flowers in shaded silks; and she embroidered them after nature, a bouquet of flowers without perfume, which left her calm, hortensias and roses trémières. The bouquet bloomed in a vase, often she rested herself for minutes by looking at it, for the silk, light as it was, weighed heavy in her fingers. In two days she had made but one rose, fresh and brilliant upon the satin; but it was her life; she would hold the needle until the last breath. Melted by suffering, thinner than ever, she was now only a pure and very beautiful flame.

What was the use of struggling further, since Félicien did not love her? Now, she would die of that conviction: he did not love her, perhaps he had never loved her. As long as she had possessed strength, she had fought against her heart, her health and her youth, which had urged her to run and rejoin him. Since she had found herself nailed there, she had been forced to resign herself, it was finished.

One morning, as Hubert installed her in her arm-chair, placing her inert little feet upon a cushion, she said, with a smile:

“ Ah! I am quite sure of being wise at present and of not making my escape! ”

Hubert hastened to go down-stairs, choking, afraid of bursting into tears.

CHAPTER XII.

THE VICTORY.

THAT night Angélique could not sleep. A fit of insomnia had possession of her; her eyelids burned, so extremely weak was she. As the Huberts had retired and as midnight would soon strike, she preferred to get up, despite the immense effort required, seized upon by the fear of dying if she remained longer in bed.

She was stifling, she threw on a wrapper and dragged herself to the window, which she opened widely. The winter was rainy and of a mild dampness. Then, she sank into her arm-chair, after having raised the wick of the lamp, which was left burning all night, upon the little table in front of her. There, beside the volume of "The Golden Legend," was the bouquet of roses trémières and hortensias which she was copying. And, in order to rouse herself again to life, she took the fancy to work, drew her frame to her and made several stitches with her wandering hands. The red silk of a rose bled between her white fingers, and it seemed as if this was the blood of her veins which was flowing away, drop by drop.

But she who for two hours had turned in vain in her burning sheets, yielded almost immediately to sleep as soon as she was seated. Her head fell back, supported by the back of the chair, and bent a trifle over her right shoulder; the silk having remained in her motionless hands, one might have thought that she was yet working.

Very white and very calm, she slumbered beneath the lamp in that chamber of the calmness and whiteness of the tomb. The light paled the great royal bed, draped with its faded pink chintz. The chest, the cupboard and the old oak chairs alone stood out, staining the walls with mourning. Minutes passed and she slept on, very calm and very white.

At last there was a sound. And, upon the balcony, Félicien appeared, trembling, as thin as she. His face was troubled, he sprang into the chamber, when he perceived her, sunk thus in the depths of the arm-chair, pitiful and so beautiful beneath the lamp. An infinite pain wrung his heart, he knelt down, lost himself in a grieved contemplation. So she was no more, the malady had destroyed her, that she seemed to him no longer to have weight, to be stretched out there like a feather which the wind was about to blow away? In her serene sleep her suffering and her resignation showed themselves. He recognized her only by her lily-like grace, the shooting up of her delicate neck above her sloping shoulders and her long and transfigured face of a virgin flying to Heaven. Her hair was no longer anything but light, her soul of snow shone beneath the transparent silk of her skin. She had the beauty of the female saints delivered from their bodies; he was dazzled and made hopeless by it with a shock which rendered him motionless, with clasped hands. She did not awake and he still looked at her.

A slight breath from Félicien's lips must have passed over Angélique's visage. Suddenly she opened her eyes very widely. She did not stir, she looked at him in her

turn, with a smile, as in a dream. It was he, she recognized him although he had changed. But she believed herself dozing still, for she had seen him thus while sleeping, which, on awaking, increased her pain.

He had stretched out his hands, he spoke.

"Dear soul, I love you. I was told what you were suffering and I hastened to you. Behold me, I love you."

She quivered and passed her fingers over her eyelids, with a mechanical movement.

"Doubt no longer. I am at your feet and I love you, I will always love you."

Then, she uttered a cry.

"Ah! it is you. I no longer expected you, and it is you."

With her groping hands she had taken his, she assured herself that he was not a wandering vision of sleep.

"You love me still, and I love you, ah! more than I believed I could love!"

It was a stupefaction of happiness, a first minute of absolute bliss, in which they forgot everything to enjoy only that certainty of loving each other again and of saying it to themselves. The sufferings of the past and the obstacles of the future had disappeared; they knew not how they had come there, but they were there; they mingled their gentle tears, they clasped each other in a chaste embrace, he overwhelmed with pity, she so emaciated by grief that she seemed but a breath in his arms. In the enchantment of her surprise, she remained as if paralyzed, swaying and happy in the depths of the arm-chair, not recovering the use of her limbs, half-raising herself only to fall back, in the intoxication of joy.

"Ah! dear seigneur, my sole wish is fulfilled: I have seen you again before dying."

He raised his head, with a look of anguish.

"Die! But I do not wish it! I am here, I love you."

She smiled divinely.

"Oh! I can die since you love me. Death no longer frightens me, I will fall asleep thus, upon your shoulder. Tell me again that you love me."

"I love you as I loved you yesterday, as I will love you to-morrow. Never doubt it, it is for eternity."

"Yes, we love each other for eternity."

Angélique, in ecstasy, looked before her, into the whiteness of the chamber. But, gradually, an awakening made her grave. She was reflecting at last, amid that great felicity which had stunned her. And the facts astonished her.

"You love me; why did you not come to me?"

"Your parents told me that you no longer loved me. I nearly died of it. And when I heard that you were ill, I resolved to come, even if I should be driven from this house, the door of which has been closed against me."

"My mother told me also that you no longer loved me, and I believed her. I had seen you with that young lady, I thought you were obeying Monseigneur."

"No, I was waiting. But I have been cowardly, I trembled before him."

There was silence. Angélique had drawn herself up. Her face had grown hard, her forehead cut by a wrinkle of anger.

"Then, they have deceived us both, they have lied to

us in order to separate us. We loved each other, and they have tortured us, they have nearly killed both of us. Well! it is abominable, it releases us from our oaths. We are free."

A furious contempt had raised her to her feet. She no longer felt her illness, her strength had returned in this awakening of her passion and her pride. To have believed her dream dead and suddenly to find it living and radiant! To say to herself that they had done nothing unworthy of their love, that the guilty ones were the others! This augmentation of herself, this triumph at last certain, excited her, threw her into a supreme rebellion.

"Well, let us go!" said she, simply.

And she walked the chamber, bravely, in all her energy and her will. Already she had selected a cloak to cover her shoulders. A bit of lace upon her head would suffice.

Félicien had uttered a cry of delight, for she had anticipated his wish, he had thought only of this flight, without finding the audacity to propose it to her. Oh! to depart together, to disappear, to cut short all vexations, all obstacles! And that on the instant, avoiding even the struggle of reflection!

"Yes, let us go at once, my dear soul. I came to take you, I know where we can get a carriage. Before dawn we shall be far away, so far that no one can ever overtake us."

She opened drawers and shut them violently, without taking anything from them, in a growing excitement. What! she had tortured herself for weeks, she had striven to drive him from her memory and had even believed she

had succeeded in doing so! And nothing had been accomplished, and that frightful task was to be done over again! No, never would she have had sufficient strength. Since they loved each other, it was very simple: they would get married, no power could separate them.

“Let me see, what must I take with me? Ah! I was foolish, with my childish scruples! When I think that they descended even to lying! Yes, I should have died if they had not summoned you! Must I take linen, garments, tell me? Here is a warmer dress. And they put a pack of ideas, a pack of fears in my head. There is good, there is evil, what one may do, what one may not do, things complicated enough to distract one. They lie still, it is not true: there is only the happiness of living, of loving the one who loves you. You are fortune, beauty, youth, my dear seigneur, and I give myself to you; my sole pleasure is in you; do with me as you please.”

She triumphed, in a flash of all those hereditary fires which they had believed dead. Strains of music intoxicated her; she saw their royal departure, that son of princes bearing her away, making her queen of a distant kingdom; and she followed him, hanging about his neck, lying upon his bosom, in such a quiver of ignorant passion that all her body grew weak with the felicity of it. To be all alone together, to abandon themselves to the gallop of horses, to flee and vanish in an embrace!

“I will take nothing with me, eh? What is the good?”

He was burning with his excitement, already at the door.

"No, nothing. Let us go quickly."

"Yes, let us go, that's it."

And she had rejoined him. But she turned, she wished to take a last look at the chamber. The lamp burned with the same pale softness, the bouquet of hortensias and roses trémières still bloomed, an unfinished rose, living nevertheless, in the centre of the frame, seemed awaiting her. Above all, never had the chamber appeared to her so white, the white walls, the white bed, the white air, as if filled with a white breath.

Something in her vacillated, and she was forced to lean on the back of a chair, which was beneath her hand, near the door.

"What ails you?" demanded Félicien, uneasily.

She did not answer, she breathed with difficulty. Then, again seized upon by a fit of trembling, her limbs already giving way beneath her, she was compelled to sit down.

"Do not be uneasy, it is nothing. A minute's rest only, and we will go."

They were silent. She glanced about the chamber, as if she had forgotten a precious object which she could not name. It was a regret, at first slight, but which increased and gradually was choking her. She no longer recollected herself. Was it all that whiteness which was retaining her thus? She had always loved white, to the point of stealing the remnants of white silk, in order to give herself the enjoyment of them in secret.

"A minute, a minute more, and we will go, my dear seigneur."

But she no longer even made an effort to arise. In

his anxiety, he had again cast himself upon his knees in front of her.

“Are you suffering? Can I do anything for you? If you are cold, I will take your little feet in my hands and warm them until they are strong enough to run.”

She shook her head.

“No, no, I am not cold, I could walk. Wait a minute, a single minute.”

He saw clearly that invisible chains were upon her limbs, held her there so strongly that in a minute, perhaps, it would be impossible for him to tear her away. And he thought of the inevitable struggle with his father on the morrow if he did not take her off at once, of that explosion before which he had recoiled for weeks. Then, he grew urgent, with an ardent supplication.

“Come, the roads are dark at this hour, the carriage will bear us away in the darkness; and we will go on constantly, constantly, rocked, asleep in each other’s arms, as if buried beneath down, without fearing the coolness of the night; and, when the day breaks, we will continue in the sunlight, further, further still, until we reach the land where people are happy. No one will know us, we will live hidden in the depths of some vast garden, having no other care than to love each other more with each new day. Flowers as tall as trees will be there, fruits sweeter than honey. And we will live upon nothing, amid that eternal spring, we will live upon our kisses, my dear soul.”

She quivered beneath this burning love, with which he warmed her face. All her being grew faint at the touch of promised joys.

“ Oh ! in a moment, presently ! ”

“ Then, if traveling fatigues us, we will return here, we will again raise up the walls of the Château d' Haute-cœur and there end our days. That is my dream. All our fortune, if necessary, shall be thrown into it with open hand. Anew the donjon shall command the two valleys. We will dwell in the house of honor, between the Tower of David and the Tower of Charlemagne. The entire colossus shall be re-established as in the days of its power, the curtains, the buildings, the chapel, in the barbarous magnificence of the past. And I desire that we there shall lead the existence of the old times, you princess and I prince, amid a suite of men-at-arms and pages. Our walls fifteen feet thick will isolate us, we will be in the legend. The sun sinks behind the hills, we return from the hunt upon great white horses, amid the respect of kneeling villages. The horn sounds, the drawbridge sinks. Kings are at our table in the evening. At night, our couch is upon a platform, surmounted by a dais, like a throne. Distant, very sweet music plays, while we fall asleep in each other's arms, amid the purple and the gold.”

Quivering, she now smiled with a proud pleasure, combatted by a suffering which had returned and taken possession of her, effacing the smile of her sad mouth. And, as with her mechanical gesture she thrust away the tempting visions, he redoubled his passion, strove to seize her in his bewildered arms.

“ Oh ! come, oh ! be mine. Let us flee, let us forget everything in our happiness.”

But she suddenly freed herself, escaped from him, in

an instinctive revolt; and, standing, this cry finally burst from her lips:

“No, no, I cannot, I can no longer!”

Nevertheless, she lamented, yet torn by the struggle, hesitating, stammering.

“I beg you, be kind, do not hurry me, wait. I would have liked so much to obey you in order to prove to you that I love you, to go upon your arm to the beautiful distant lands, to dwell royally with you in the château of your dreams. That seemed to me so easy, I had so often re-made the plan of our flight. And—how shall I tell you?—now it appears to me impossible. It is as if suddenly the door had been walled up and I could not go out.”

He wished to dazzle her anew; she silenced him with a gesture.

“No, speak no more. How singular it is! While you tell me such sweet, such tender things, which should convince me, fear seizes upon me, a chill freezes me. Mon Dieu! what is the matter with me? Your words remove me from you. If you continue, I shall no longer be able to listen to you, you will have to depart. Wait, wait a little.”

And she walked slowly about the chamber, anxious, seeking to recover herself, while he, motionless, despaired.

“I had believed that I no longer loved you, but that was only from vexation assuredly, since, there, just now, when I again found you at my feet, my heart gave a leap, my first impulse was to follow you like a slave. Then, if I love you, why do you frighten me?—and who prevents me from quitting this chamber, as if invisible hands

held my body everywhere, held me by each of the hairs of my head ? ”

She had stopped near the bed, she returned towards the cupboard, went thus before the other pieces of furniture. Certainly, secret bonds united them to her person. The white walls especially, the great whiteness of the mansarded ceiling enveloped her with a robe of purity, of which she would have divested herself only with tears. For the future all that made a part of her being, the surroundings had entered into her. And she realized this more forcibly yet when she found herself facing the frame, which had remained beneath the lamp at the side of the table. Her heart melted on seeing the commenced rose, which she would never finish if she departed in that way, like a criminal. The years of toil evoked themselves in her memory, those years so sage, so happy, such a long habitude of peace and honesty, which the thought of a fault revolted. Each day, the cool little house of the embroiderers, the active and pure life which she had led there, had re-made a portion of the blood of her veins.

But he, seeing her thus reconquered by the things, felt the need of hastening the departure.

“ Come, the hours are passing, soon there will no longer be time.”

Then, the light came and she cried :

“ It is already too late. You see plainly that I cannot follow you. There was formerly within me a passionate and proud being who would have thrown both her arms about your neck that you might bear her away. But I have been changed, I no longer recognize myself. You do not then hear that everything in this chamber cries

out to me to remain? And I no longer rebel, it has become my joy to obey."

Without speaking, without arguing with her, he strove to seize her again, to take her away like an indocile child. She avoided him and escaped towards the window.

"No, in mercy! Just now I would have followed you. But it was the final rebellion. Gradually, without my knowledge, the humility and the renunciation which they have placed in me must have amassed themselves there. Hence, at each return of my hereditary sin, the struggle was less severe, I triumphed over myself with greater ease. And the supreme strife has taken place, it is over for the future, I have conquered myself. Ah! dear seigneur, I love you so much! Do nothing against our happiness. To be happy, we must submit."

And, as he took another step, she found herself before the wide-open window, upon the balcony.

"You would not force me to throw myself from there! Listen, comprehend that I have with me that which surrounds me. The things have spoken to me for a long while, I hear voices, and never have I heard them speak to me so loudly. The whole Clos-Marie is encouraging me not to spoil my existence and yours by giving myself to you against your father's will. That murmuring voice is the Chevrotte, so clear, so cool that it seems to have put within me its crystal purity. That voice as of a crowd, tender and deep, is the entire ground, the grass, the trees, all the peaceful life of that sacred corner, working for the peace of my own life. And the voices come from further off still, from the elms of the bishop's house, from that horizon of branches, the slightest one of which

is interested in my victory. Then, that grand, sovereign voice is my old friend, the cathedral, which has instructed me, eternally awake in the night. Each one of its stones, the little columns of its windows, the buttresses of its arch have a murmur which I distinguish, a tongue which I comprehend. Listen to what they say, that even in death hope remains. When one humiliates one's self, love stays and triumphs. And, finally, the air itself is full of a whispering of souls—behold my companions, the virgins, who arrive, invisible. Listen, listen!”

Smiling, she had raised her hand, with a gesture of profound attention. All her being was snatched away in the scattered breaths. They were the virgins of the Legend, whom her imagination had evoked as in her childhood, and the mystic flight of whom came from the old book, with simple pictures, placed upon the table. Agnes first, clad in her locks, having on her finger the betrothal ring of the priest Paulin. Then, all the others—Barbe with her tower, Geneviève with her lambs, Cécile with her viol, Agathe with her torn breasts, Elizabeth begging along the highways, Catherine triumphing over the doctors. A miracle renders Luce so heavy that a thousand men and five pairs of oxen could not draw her to an evil place. The governor who wishes to kiss Anastasie becomes blind. And all, in the clear night, fly, very white, their bosoms still opened by the sword of the tortures, letting flow, instead of blood, rivers of milk. The air is white with it, the darkness brightens as with a stream of stars. Ah! to die of love as they did, to die virgin, beaming with whiteness, at the first kiss of the husband!

Félicien had approached.

"I am the one who exists, Angélique, and you refuse me for dreams."

"Dreams," murmured she.

"For if those visions surround you, it is because you yourself have created them. Come, put nothing more of yourself in the things and they will be silent."

She made an excited movement.

"Oh! no, let them speak, let them speak louder! They are my strength, they give me the courage to resist you. It is the grace, and never has it inundated me with a like energy. If it is only a dream, the dream which I have put about me and which returns to me, what matters it! It saves me, it bears me away without stain in the midst of appearances. Oh! renounce, obey like me. I do not wish to follow you."

In her weakness, she had drawn herself up, resolute, invincible.

"But they have deceived you," resumed he, "they have descended even to lying in order to disunite us!"

"The fault of others will not excuse ours."

"Ah! your heart is withdrawn from me, you love me no longer."

"I love you, I struggle against you only for our love and our happiness. Obtain your father's consent and I will follow you."

"You do not know my father. God alone could bend him. Then, say, is it over? If my father directs me to marry Claire de Voincourt, must I obey him?"

At this last blow, Angélique wavered. She could not restrain this complaint:

“It is too much. I beg of you, go away, be not cruel. Why did you come? I was resigned, I was growing used to the misfortune of not being beloved by you. And behold, you love me and all my martyrdom has re-commenced! Why would you have me live now?”

Félicien believed she was weakening, he repeated:

“If my father wishes me to marry her——”

She stiffened herself against her suffering; and she again succeeded in holding herself upon her feet amid the breaking of her heart; then, dragging herself towards the table, as if to give him passage:

“Marry her, you must obey.”

He found himself in his turn before the window, ready to depart, since she was sending him away.

“But you will die of it!” he cried.

She had calmed herself, she murmured, with a smile:

“Oh! my death is half-accomplished.”

For an instant longer he gazed at her, so white, so reduced, of the lightness of a feather which the wind blows off; and he made a gesture of furious resolution, he disappeared in the night.

She, leaning upon the back of the arm-chair, when he had gone, despairingly stretched her hands towards the darkness. Great sobs shook her body, a sweat of agony covered her face. Mon Dieu! it was the end, she would see him no more. All her illness had seized upon her again, her weak limbs gave way beneath her. It was with great difficulty she regained her bed, upon which she fell victorious and breathless. Next morning, they found her there dying. The lamp had gone out at dawn, in the triumphal whiteness of the chamber.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MIRACLE.

ANGÉLIQUE was dying. It was ten o'clock, a clear morning of the close of winter, brisk weather, with a white sky brightened by the sunlight. In the vast royal bed, draped with old pink chintz, she lay motionless, having been unconscious since the previous evening. Stretched out upon her back, her ivory hands abandoned on the coverlet, she had opened her eyes no more; and her sharp profile had grown thin beneath the golden glory of her locks; and one would have believed her already dead had it not been for the very faint breath which issued from her lips.

The day before Angélique had confessed and taken communion, feeling that she was very ill. The good Abbé Cornille, towards three o'clock, had brought her the holy viaticum. Then, in the evening, as death was gradually freezing her, a great desire had come to her for the extreme unction, the celestial medicine instituted for the cure of the soul and the body. Before losing consciousness, her last speech, scarcely a murmur, gathered by Hubertine, had stammered out this desire for the holy oils, oh! instantly, that there might yet be time. But the night was advancing, they had waited for the day, and the Abbé, notified, was at last about to arrive.

Everything was ready, the Huberts had finished arranging the chamber. Beneath the gay sunlight, which,

at that early hour, struck the window panes, it was of the whiteness of dawn, with the bareness of its great white walls. They had covered the table with a white cloth. To the right and left of a crucifix, two wax candles were burning upon it in silver candlesticks, brought up from the salon. And on it also were holy water and a sprinkler, a ewer of water with its basin and a towel, two plates of white porcelain, one full of flakes of wadding, the other of horns of white paper. They had gone through the green-houses of the lower town without finding other flowers than roses, huge white roses, the enormous tufts of which garnished the table as with a quiver of white lace. And, amid this accumulated whiteness, the dying Angélique still breathed with her faint breath, her eyelids closed.

At his morning visit the doctor had said that she would not live the day out. From one moment to another, perhaps she might die without even recovering consciousness. And the Huberts were waiting. The thing must be, despite their tears. If they had wished for that death, preferring the dead child to the child in rebellion, it was because God had wished for it with them. Now, it had escaped from their power, they could only submit. They regretted nothing, but their beings succumbed with grief. Since she had been there, dying, they had cared for her, refusing all outside aid. They were still alone at that last hour, and they were waiting.

Hubert mechanically opened the door of the faïence stove, the roar of which resembled a groan. Silence succeeded, a mild heat paled the roses. For an instant past, Hubertine had been listening to the sounds from the

cathedral behind the wall. The swaying of a bell had imparted a quiver to the old stones ; without doubt, the Abbé Cornille had quitted the church with the holy oils ; and she went down-stairs to receive him at the threshold of the house. Two minutes elapsed, a great murmur filled the narrow stairway of the turret. Then, in the warm chamber, Hubert, stricken with amazement, began to tremble, while a religious fear, a hope also, made him sink upon his knees.

Instead of the old priest expected, it was Monseigneur who entered, Monseigneur in rochet of lace, having the violet stole and bearing the silver vessel in which was the oil of the sick, blessed by himself on Holy Thursday. His eagle eyes remained fixed, his handsome pale face, beneath the thick curls of his white locks, preserved its majesty. And, behind him, like a simple clerk, walked the Abbé Cornille, a crucifix in his hand and the ritual beneath the other arm.

Standing a moment upon the threshold, the Bishop said, in a grave voice :

“ Pax huic domui.”

“ Et omnibus habitantibus in ea,” responded the priest, in a lower tone.

When they had entered, Hubertine, who had come up after them, also trembling in her excitement, knelt beside her husband. Both of them, prostrating themselves, prayed with all their souls.

The day succeeding his visit to Angélique, the terrible explanation had taken place between Félicien and his father. On the morning of that day he forced the doors, caused himself to be received in the very oratory, where

the Bishop was yet at prayer, after one of his nights of frightful struggle against the uprising past. In that respectful son, bent until then by fear, rebellion, for a long time stifled, broke its bonds; and the shock was rough which dashed one against the other those two men of the same blood, prompt at violence. The old man, having quitted his praying desk, listened, his cheeks instantly empurpled, standing, mute, in haughty obstinacy. The young man, his visage also flaming, emptied his heart, spoke in an upbraiding voice, which was gradually raised. He said that Angélique was ill, dying; he told in what a crisis of terrified tenderness he had concocted the plan of fleeing with her, and how she had refused to follow him, with the submission and the chastity of a saint. Would it not be a murder to let that obedient child die, who persisted in receiving him only from his father's hand? When, at last, she might have had him, his title and his fortune, she had cried no, she had struggled, achieving a victory over her passion. And he loved her to the point of dying also!—he despised himself for not being at her side, in order that they might expire together, with the same breath! Could any one have the cruelty to desire the miserable end of them both, when a word, a simple yes would cause so much happiness? Ah! the pride of name, the glory of money, the obstinacy of will, did those things count when there was no longer anything but to make two people happy? And he clasped, he wrung his trembling hands, beside himself; he exacted a consent, still supplicating, already menacing. But the Bishop opened his lips only to answer with the word of his omnipotence: "Never!"

Then, Félicien, in his rebellion, grew wild, losing all discretion. He spoke of his mother. It was she who was resuscitated in him to claim the rights of passion. So his father had not loved her, so he was rejoiced at her death, that he showed himself hard to such an extent to those who adored each other and wished to live? But it was in vain that he had frozen himself in the renunciations of worship, she would return to haunt and torture him, since he tortured the child he had had by their marriage. And he killed her again by refusing that child his chosen bride. One could not wed the church when one had wedded a woman. And, in the face of his motionless father, big with a frightful silence, he hurled the words perjurer and assassin. Then, terrified, staggering, he fled.

When he was alone, Monseigneur, as if a knife had been plunged into his breast, whirled about and fell, with both his knees upon his praying desk. A fearful rattle came from his throat. Ah! the miseries of the heart, the invincible weaknesses of the flesh! That woman, that dead being constantly resuscitated, he adored her as on the first evening when he had kissed her white feet; and this son, he adored him as a dependence of herself, a little of her life which she had left him; and this young girl, this little work-girl whom he had repulsed, he adored her also, with the adoration which his son had for her. Now, all three were the despair of his nights. Though he had not been willing to avow it to himself, she had then touched him in the cathedral, that little embroiderer, so simple, with her golden locks, and the fresh nape of her neck, emitting

the odor of youth? He saw her again, she passed before him, delicate, of a triumphant submission. A remorse would not have entered into him with a step more certain or more conquering. He could reject her before the world, but he well knew that for the future she held his heart in her humble hands, pricked by the needle. While Félicien was violently supplicating him, he had perceived, behind his blonde head, the two adored women, she for whom he wept, she who was dying for his child. And, ravaged, sobbing, not knowing where to recover calmness, he demanded of Heaven to give him the courage to tear out his heart, since that heart was no longer God's.

Monseigneur prayed until evening. When he reappeared, he was of the whiteness of wax, torn but resolved. He could do nothing, he repeated the terrible word: "Never!" God alone had the right to annul his decision; and God, implored, was silent. It was ordained to suffer.

Two days passed; Félicien prowled in front of the little house, wild with grief, on the watch for news. Each time that any one came out, he grew faint with fear. And it was thus that, on the morning when Hubertine ran to the church to demand the holy oils, he learned that Angélique would not last the day out. The Abbé Cornille was not there; he scoured the town to find him, placing in him a last hope of divine succor. Then, as he brought back the good priest, his hope vanished, he fell into a fit of doubt and rage. What was to be done? How was Heaven to be forced to interpose? He escaped, again forced the doors of the bishop's house;

and the Bishop, for a moment, was frightened by the incoherence of his words. Finally, he comprehended: Angélique was dying, she awaited the extreme unction, God alone could save her. The young man had come only to cry out his affliction, to break with that abominable father, to cast his murder in his face. But Monseigneur heard him without anger, his eyes suddenly brightened by a ray of light, as if a voice had spoken at last. And he made him a sign to walk first, he followed him, saying:

“If God wishes, I wish.”

A great quiver shot through Félicien. His father consented, absolved from his decision, yielding to the good will of the miracle. They no longer were anything, God would act. Tears blinded him while Monseigneur, in the sacristy, took the holy oils from the hands of the Abbé Cornille. He accompanied them, bewildered, he dare not enter the chamber, but sank upon his knees on the landing, in front of the wide open door.

“Pax huic domui.”

“Et omnibus habitantibus in ea.”

Monseigneur placed the holy oils upon the white table, between the two wax candles, tracing in the air the sign of the cross with the silver vase as he did so. He afterwards took the crucifix from the Abbé's hands and approached the sick girl that she might kiss it. But Angélique was still without consciousness, her eyelids closed, her hands stiffened, like the slender and rigid figures of stone couched upon tombs. For an instant he gazed at her, saw from her slight breathing that she

was not dead and put the crucifix to her lips. He waited, his face preserved the majesty of the minister of penitence, no human emotion showed itself there when he had established that not a quiver had run over her sharp profile or amid her locks of light. She was alive, however, that sufficed for the redemption of her sins.

Then, Monseigneur received from the Abbé the holy water urn and sprinkler; and, while the latter presented to him the open ritual, he cast the holy water over the dying girl, at the same time reading the Latin words:

“Asperges me, Domine, hyssopo, et mundabor; lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor.”

Drops sprang forth, the whole vast bed was refreshed by them as with dew. He rained them upon the fingers, upon the cheeks; but, one by one, they rolled there as upon an insensible bit of marble. And afterwards the Bishop turned towards the bystanders, he sprinkled them in their turn. Hubert and Hubertine, kneeling side by side, in their need of ardent faith, bent beneath the shower of this benediction. And the Bishop also blessed the chamber, the furniture, the white walls, all that bare whiteness, when, on passing near the door, he found himself in front of his son, who had fallen upon the threshold and was sobbing in his burning hands. With a slow movement, he raised the sprinkler three times, he purified him with a gentle rain. This holy water, thus spread everywhere, was, in the first place, to drive away the evil spirits, flying by the thousand millions and invisible. At that moment, a pale ray of winter sunlight glided as far as the bed; and a whole flight of atoms, of agile dust, seemed alive there, innu-

merable, descended from a corner of the window as if to bathe with their warm multitude the cold hands of the dying girl.

Having returned in front of the table, Monseigneur said the prayer:

“Exaudi nos.”

He did not hasten, death was there, amid the curtains of old chintz; but he felt that it was lingering, that it would be patient. And, although, in the annihilation of her being, the child could not hear him, he spoke to her, he demanded:

“Have you nothing on your conscience which gives you trouble? Confess your torments, relieve yourself, my daughter.”

Stretched out, she maintained silence. When he had in vain given her the time to reply, he commenced the exhortation in the same full voice, without appearing to know that not one of his words reached her.

“Recollect, demand, in the depths of yourself, pardon of God. The sacrament will purify you and give you new strength. Your eyes will become clear, your ears chaste, your nostrils cool, your mouth holy and your hands innocent.”

He said to the end what it was necessary to say, his eyes upon her; and she scarcely breathed, not one of the lashes of her closed eyelids stirred. Then, he commanded:

“Recite the creed.”

After having waited, he recited it himself.

“Credo in unum Deum.”

“Amen,” responded the Abbé Cornille.

They yet heard, upon the landing, Félicien weeping with great sobs, in the weakening of hope. Hubert and Hubertine were praying, with the same upward and timid movement, as if they had felt the unknown omnipotences descend. A pause took place, a stammering of prayer. And, now, the litanies of the ritual rolled out, the invocation to the male and female saints, the flight of the Kyrie Eleisons, calling all Heaven to the aid of miserable humanity.

Then, suddenly, the voices fell, there was a profound silence. Monseigneur washed his fingers beneath the few drops of water which the Abbé poured out for him from the ewer. Finally, he again took the vessel of the holy oils, removed its lid and placed himself before the bed. It was the solemn approach of the sacrament, of that last sacrament, the efficacy of which effaces all sins mortal or venial, not pardoned, which remain in the soul after the other sacraments received: old remnants of forgotten sins, sins committed unconsciously, sins of languor which have not permitted a firm re-establishment in the grace of God. But where were those sins to be found? They came, then, from without, in that ray of sunlight, with its dancing dust, which seemed to bring germs of life even upon that vast royal bed, white and cold with the death of a virgin.

Monseigneur was absorbed, his glances again upon Angélique, assuring himself that the faint breath had not ceased. He still resisted all human emotion on seeing her so wasted, of the beauty of an angel, immaterial already. His thumb did not tremble when he dipped it in the holy oils and began the anointing upon the five

parts of the body where the senses reside, the five windows by which evil enters the soul.

First, upon the eyes, upon the closed eyelids, the right, the left; and the thumb lightly traced the sign of the cross.

“Per istam sanctam unctionem, et suam piissimam misericordiam, indulgeat tibi Dominus quidquid per visum deliquisti.”

And the sins of the sight were repaired, lascivious glances, dishonest curiosity, the vanities of spectacles, the evil readings, the tears shed for culpable vexations. And she had known no other book than “The Legend,” no other horizon than the arch of the cathedral, which had shut off from her the rest of the world. And she had wept only in the struggle of obedience against passion.

The Abbé Cornille took one of the flakes of wadding, wiped the two eyelids with it and then enclosed it in one of the horns of white paper.

Afterwards, Monseigneur anointed the ears, with lobes of the transparency of mother-of-pearl, the right, the left, scarcely moistened with the sign of the cross.

“Per istam sanctam unctionem, et suam piissimam misericordiam, indulgeat tibi Dominus quidquid per auditum deliquisti.”

And every abomination of the hearing was redeemed, all the words, all the strains of music which corrupt, slander, calumny, blasphemy, licentious talk heard with complaisance, the lies of love aiding in the defeat of duty, the profane songs exciting the flesh, the violins of orchestras weeping voluptuousness beneath the chandeliers. And, in her isolation as a cloistered girl, she

had never even heard the free gossip of the neighbors, the oath of a carter as he whips his horses. And she had in her ears no other music than the holy hymns, the thunder of organs, the stammer of prayers, with which the little house vibrated, at the side of the old church.

The Abbé, after having wiped the ears with a flake of wadding, put it in one of the horns of white paper.

Afterwards, Monseigneur passed to the nostrils, the right, the left, like two petals of a white rose, which his thumb purified with the sign of the cross.

“Per istam sanctam unctionem, et suam piissimam misericordiam, indulgeat tibi Dominus quidquid per odoratum deliquisti.”

And the sense of smell returned to the first innocence, washed of every stain, not only of the carnal shame of perfumes, of the seduction of flowers with breaths too sweet, of the odors scattered in the air which put the soul to sleep, but also of the sins of the internal scent, the bad examples given to others, the contagious pest of scandal. And, good, pure, she had finished by being a lily among the lilies, a tall lily, the perfume of which strengthened the weak and brightened the strong. And, in point of fact, she was so purely delicate that she had never been able to tolerate the ardent pinks, the musky lilacs, the exciting hyacinths, at ease only amid the calm blooms, the violets of the wood.

The Abbé wiped the nostrils and slipped the flake of wadding into another of the horns of white paper.

Afterwards, Monseigneur, coming down to the closed mouth, which the faint breath scarcely opened, barred the lower lip with the sign of the cross.

“Per istam sanctam unctionem, et suam piissimam misericordiam, indulgeat tibi Dominus quidquid per gustum deliquisti.”

And her whole mouth was now a chalice of innocence, for it was, this time, the pardon of the mean satisfactions of taste, gluttony, the sensuality of wine and honey, the pardon above all of the crimes of the tongue, the universal culprit, the provoker, the poisoner, the maker of quarrels, wars, errors, the false words with which Heaven itself is darkened. And gluttony had never been her vice, she had come, like Elizabeth, to nourishing herself without distinguishing the food. And, if she had lived in error, it was her dream which had put her there, the hope of the beyond, the consolation of the invisible, all that enchanted world which her ignorance had created and which had made her a saint.

The Abbé, after having wiped the mouth, folded the flake of wadding in the fourth of the horns of white paper.

Finally, Monseigneur, to the right, then to the left, anointed the palms of the two little ivory hands, turned over upon the coverlet, effaced their sins with the sign of the cross.

“Per istam sanctam unctionem, et suam piissimam misericordiam, indulgeat tibi Dominus quidquid per tactum deliquisti.”

And the entire body was white, washed of its last stains, those of the touch, the most soiling, robberies, assaults, murders, without counting the sins of the other parts omitted, the bosom, the back and the feet, which this unction also redeemed, all that which burns and

roars in the flesh, our anger, our desires, our unruly passions, the charnel-houses in which we run, the forbidden joys. And, since she had lain there, dying of her victory, she had overcome her violence, her pride and her passion, as if she had brought the original evil only for the glory of triumphing over it. And she had not even known that she had had desires, that her flesh had groaned with love, that the great quiver of her nights might be culpable, to such an extent was she armored by ignorance, her soul white, all white.

The Abbé wiped the hands, put the flake of wadding in the last horn of white paper, and burned the five horns in the depths of the stove.

The ceremony was over, Monseigneur washed his fingers before saying the final prayer. He had only to again exhort the dying girl, as he placed in her hand the symbolical wax taper to drive away the demons and to show that she had recovered the baptismal innocence. But she lay rigid, her eyes closed, dead. The holy oils had purified her body, the signs of the cross had left their traces on the five windows of the soul, without causing a wave of life to remount to her cheeks. Implored, hoped for, the prodigy had not been produced. Hubert and Hubertine, yet kneeling side by side, no longer prayed, gazing with their fixed eyes so ardently that they might have been thought immobilized forever, like those figures of donees who await the resurrection in the corner of an old stained glass window. Félicien had now dragged himself on his knees to the very door, having ceased to sob, his head also erect that he might see, enraged at the deafness of God.

For the last time Monseigneur approached the bed, followed by the Abbé Cornille, who held, lighted, the wax taper which was to be placed in the hand of the sick girl. And the Bishop, persisting in going to the end of the rite in order to leave God the time to act, pronounced the formula:

"Accipe lampadem ardentem, custodi unctionem tuam, ut cum Dominus ad judicandum venerit, possis occurrere ei cum omnibus sanctis, et vivas in secula seculorum."

"Amen," responded the Abbé.

But, when they strove to open Angélique's hand and to make it grasp the wax taper, the inert hand escaped from them and fell back upon the bosom.

Then, Monseigneur was seized upon by a great fit of trembling. It was the emotion, fought for a long while, which was overflowing in him, bearing away the last rigidities of the priesthood. He had loved that child from the day she had come to sob at his knees, pure, emitting the fresh odor of youth. Now, she was pitiful, with that pallor of the tomb, of a beauty so sad that he could no longer turn his glances towards the bed without his heart being secretly flooded with grief. He ceased to control himself, two big tears swelled his eyelids and flowed over his cheeks. She could not die thus, he was vanquished by her spell in death.

And Monseigneur, recalling the miracles of his race, that power which Heaven had given them to cure, thought that God was, without doubt, awaiting his consent as a father. He invoked Saint Agnes, before whom all his family had made their devotions, and like Jean

V. of Hauteœur, praying at the bedsides of the pest-stricken and kissing them, he prayed, he kissed Angélique upon the mouth.

"If God wishes, I wish."

Instantly, Angélique opened her eyelids. She gazed at him without surprise, awakened from her long swoon; and her lips, warm with the kiss, smiled. They were the things which ought to be realized, perhaps she had aroused to dream them once again, finding it very simple that Monseigneur was there to betroth her to his son, since the hour had at last arrived. Of herself she sat up in the midst of the vast royal bed.

The Bishop, having in his eyes the light of the prodigy, repeated the formula:

"Accipe lampadem ardentem."

"Amen," responded the Abbé.

Angélique took the lighted taper, and, with a firm hand, she held it upright. Life had returned, the flame burned very brightly, driving away the spirits of the night.

A great cry went through the chamber. Félicien was on his feet, as if raised up by the wind of the miracle; while the Huberts, thrown back by the same breath, remained upon their knees, their eyes staring, their faces rapturous at what they had seen. The bed had appeared to them enveloped by a bright light; whiteness still mounted in the ray of sunlight, like white feathers; and the white walls, all the white chamber preserved a snowy brilliancy. In the midst of it, like a lily refreshed and straightened up on its stalk, Angélique gave out that brightness. Her fine golden locks encircled her with an

aureole, her violet-hued eyes shone divinely, all the splendor of life radiated from her pure visage. And Félicien, seeing her cured, overwhelmed by that grace which Heaven had shown them, approached and knelt beside the bed.

"Ah! dear soul, you recognize us, you live. I am yours, my father wishes it, since God has wished it."

She nodded her head and gave a gay laugh.

"Oh! I knew, I was waiting. All I have seen ought to be."

Monseigneur, who had recovered his serene haughtiness, again placed the crucifix upon her mouth, which she kissed, this time like a submissive servant. Then, with a sweeping gesture, through all the chamber, above all the heads, he gave the last benedictions, while the Huberts and the Abbé Cornille wept.

Félicien had taken Angélique's hand. And, in the other little hand, the taper of innocence was burning, very tall.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MARRIAGE.

THE marriage was fixed for the early part of March. But Angélique remained very weak, despite the joy which radiated from her entire person. She had forthwith decided to go down again to the work-room from the first week of her convalescence, persisting in finishing the panel of embroidery in bas-relief for Monseigneur's chair: it was her last task as a work-girl, said she, gayly, and one did not leave an order half-done. Then, exhausted by this effort, she had again been forced to keep her chamber. She lived there smiling, without recovering the full health of the past, always as white and immaterial as beneath the holy oils, going and coming with the light step of a vision, resting dreamily for hours after having made some long journey from her table to her window. And they postponed the marriage; they decided that they would await her complete re-establishment, which, with proper care, could not be long in being effected.

Every afternoon Félicien went up-stairs to see her. Hubert and Hubertine were there; they passed adorable hours together; they continually remade the same projects. Seated, she showed herself of a gay vivacity, the first to speak of the days of their coming existence which were to be so busy—the travels, Hauteœur to be restored, all the felicities to be known. One would then have called her completely saved, regaining strength in the forward spring

which came in, warmer daily, through the open window. And she relapsed into the soberness of her visions only when she was alone, not fearing to be seen. At night voices had grazed her; then, it was an appeal from the soil in her vicinity; in her also light had broken—she comprehended that the miracle was continuing solely for the realization of her dream. Was she not already dead—no longer existing among the appearances save through a delay of things? This, in hours of solitude, soothed her with an infinite softness, without regret at the idea of being borne away in her joy, always certain of going to the extremity of happiness. The malady would wait. Her great delight became simply serious because of it; she abandoned herself, inert, no longer feeling her body, flying to pure pleasures; and it required that she should hear the Huberts open the door, or that Félicien should enter to see her, to make her straighten herself up, feigning returned health, chatting with laughter of their years of housekeeping, very far off in the future.

Towards the close of March Angélique seemed to brighten further. Twice, when all alone, she had had swoons. One morning she had just fallen at the foot of the bed as Hubert brought her up a bowl of milk, and, to deceive him, she joked on the floor, said that she was hunting for a lost needle. Then, the next day, she grew very joyous; she spoke of hastening the marriage, of putting it in the middle of April. Everybody protested: she was still so weak—why not wait?—there was no hurry. But she grew excited; she wished it immediately, immediately. Hubertine, surprised, felt a suspicion of this haste, looked at her for an instant, turning pale at the

slight, cold breath which grazed her. Already the dear patient had calmed herself, in her tender need of causing an illusion for the others, she who knew herself condemned. Hubert and Félicien, in continual adoration, had seen nothing, felt nothing. And, getting on her feet by an effort of will, going and coming with her supple step of the past, she was charming; she said that the ceremony would complete her cure, so happy would she be. Besides, Monseigneur would decide. When, that very evening, the Bishop was there, she explained to him her desire, her eyes in his, without taking her glance from him, her voice so soft that, beneath the words, there was the ardent supplication of what she did not say. Monseigneur knew, and he understood. He fixed the marriage for the middle of April.

Then they lived in a tumult; great preparations were made. Hubert, despite his voluntary guardianship, was compelled to ask the consent of the Director of the Assistance Publique, who still represented the family council, Angélique not being of age; and M. Grandsire, the Judge of the Peace, had charged himself with those details in order to spare Félicien and the young girl the painful side of them. But Angélique, having seen that they were using concealment, had her pupil's book brought up to her one day, desiring to hand it herself to her betrothed. She was thenceforward in a state of perfect humility; she wished that he should fully know the meanness from which he drew her in order to exalt her in the glory of his legendary name and of his great fortune. That administrative document, that register in which there was only a date followed by a number, constituted her papers. She

turned over the leaves once more, then gave it to him without confusion, joyous that she was nothing and that he made her everything. He was deeply touched by this; he knelt, kissed her hands with tears, as if it were she who had made him the sole gift, the royal gift of her heart.

The preparations occupied Beaumont for two weeks, turning the upper town and the lower town topsy-turvy. Twenty work-girls, they said, were toiling night and day on the trousseau. The wedding dress alone occupied three of them; and there would be an outfit costing a million francs, a flood of lace, of velvet, of satin and of silk, an ocean of precious stones, of diamonds fit for a queen. But, above all, the liberal alms stirred the people, the bride having insisted upon giving to the poor as much as they had given her, another million which descended upon the country in a rain of gold. At last she had satisfied her old need of charity, in the prodigalities of the dream, with open hands, letting flow over the poverty-stricken a river of wealth, a freshet of comfort. From the bare and white little chamber, from the old arm-chair in which she was nailed, she laughed with delight at it when the Abbé Cornille brought her the lists of distribution. Again, again! they never distributed enough. She would have desired Père Mascart seated at princely feasts, the Chouteaus living in the luxury of a palace, Mère Gabet cured, restored to youth, by dint of money; and the Lemballeuses, the mother and the three daughters, she would have overwhelmed with dresses and jewels. The hail of gold pieces redoubled upon the town, as in the fairy tales, even beyond the daily necessities, for the beauty and the joy, the glory of the gold, falling in the street and shining in the broad sunlight of charity.

Finally, the evening before the great day, all was ready. Félicien had acquired, behind the bishop's house, in the Rue Magloire, an old hôtel, which they had finished furnishing sumptuously. It consisted of large apartments, ornamented with admirable hangings, filled with the most costly furniture, a salon in ancient tapestry, a blue boudoir of the mildness of the morning sky, a bed-chamber above all, a nest of white silk and of white lace, nothing but white, light, flying, a very quiver of brightness. But Angélique, whom a carriage would have to take, had constantly refused to go see these marvels. She listened to the recital of them with an enchanted smile, and she gave no order, she would not occupy herself with the arrangement. No, no, that was passing very far off, in that unknown world of which she was still ignorant. Since those who loved her were preparing that happiness for her so tenderly, she desired to enter into it like a princess come from fabled lands, approaching a real kingdom, where she would reign. And, in like manner, she prohibited herself from having a knowledge of the wedding outfit, which also was there, the trousseau of fine linen embroidered with her marquisés initial, the gala toilets loaded with embroidery, the ancient jewels, a whole heavy cathedral treasure, and the modern jewels, prodigies of delicate mounting, brilliants the rain of which showed only their pure water. It sufficed for the victory of her dream that this fortune awaited her at her house, radiant in the coming reality of life. The wedding dress alone was brought, the morning of the marriage.

That morning, awake before the others, in her vast bed, Angélique experienced a minute of hopeless weakness, fear-

ing that she could not keep on her feet. She tried, felt her limbs bend beneath her, and, giving the lie to the brave serenity she had shown for weeks, a frightful anguish, the last, cried out from all her being. Then, as soon as she saw Hubertine enter joyously, she was surprised to walk, for it certainly was no longer her own strength, help surely had come to her from the invisible, friendly hands supported her. They dressed her; she no longer weighed anything; she was so light that, joking, her mother expressed astonishment at it, saying to her not to stir further if she did not wish to fly away. And, during all the toilet, the cool little house of the Huberts, living at the side of the cathedral, quivered with the enormous breath of the giant, with what was already overflowing from it of the ceremony, the feverish activity of the clergy, the flights of the bells especially, a continuous rocking of joy with which the old stones vibrated.

Over the upper tower, for an hour, the bells had sounded as at the grand fêtes. The sun had arisen radiant, a limpid morning of April, a flood of spring rays, alive with the sonorous appeals which had aroused the inhabitants. All Beaumont was glad because of the marriage of the little embroiderer, whom all the hearts had wedded. That beautiful sunlight riddling the streets was like the rain of gold, the alms of the fairy tales, which had gushed from her frail hands. And, beneath this joy of the light, the crowd surged in a body towards the cathedral, filling the lateral naves, overflowing upon the Place du Cloître. There, loomed up the main façade like a bouquet of stone, very flowery, of the most ornamental Gothic, above the severe Twelfth Century masonry. In the towers the bells con-

tinued to ring, and the façade seemed to be the very glory of this marriage, the flight of the poor girl across the miracle, all that shot up and flamed, with the pierced lace-work, the lily bloom of the little columns, of the balustrades, of the sub-cornices, of the niches of saints surmounted by a canopy, of the gable-ends hollowed out in clover-leaves, garnished with little crosses and flower-work, with immense roses blooming forth the mystic radiance of their frames.

At ten o'clock the organs thundered, Angélique and Félicien entered, walking slowly towards the main altar, between the compact ranks of the crowd. A breath of tender admiration made the heads undulate. He, greatly affected, passed along proud and grave, in his blonde beauty of a young god, thinned still more by the severity of the black coat. But she, particularly, swelled the hearts, so adorable, so divine, of the mysterious charm of a vision. Her dress was of white moire, simply covered with old Mechlin lace, which held pearls, strings of fine pearls marking the garnitures of the corsage and the flounces of the skirt. A veil of old Point d'Angleterre, fixed upon the head by a triple crown of pearls, enveloped her, descended to the heels. And nothing else, not a flower, not a jewel, nothing but this light flood, this quivering cloud, which seemed to surround with a beating of wings her soft little face of a virgin of a stained-glass window, with violet eyes and golden hair.

Two arm-chairs of crimson velvet awaited Félicien and Angélique before the altar; and, behind them, while the organs swelled their phrase of welcome, Hubert and Hubertine knelt upon the praying desks reserved for the

family. The day before they had had an immense joy with which they were yet bewildered, not finding enough actions of grace for their individual happiness, which had added itself to that of their daughter. Hubertine, having gone to the cemetery once more, in the sad thought of their solitude, of the empty little house, when that beloved daughter should be no longer there, had supplicated her mother for a long while; and, suddenly, a shock within her had straightened her up, quivering, heard at last. From the depths of the soil, after thirty years, the obstinate dead woman had pardoned, had sent them the child of pardon, so ardently desired and awaited. Was this the reward of their charity, for having taken in that poor creature of misery picked up one snowy day at the door of the cathedral, now wedded to a prince in all the pomp of grand ceremonies? They remained upon both knees, without prayer, without formulated words, in an ecstasy of gratitude, all their beings exhaling themselves in infinite thanks. And, on the other side of the nave, upon his episcopal chair, Monseigneur was also of the family, full of the majesty of God whom he represented. He shone in the glory of his sacred vestments, his face of a serene haughtiness, freed from the passions of this world, while the two angels of the panel of embroidery, above his head, supported the shining arms of the Hauteceurs.

Then, the solemnity began. All the clergy were present, priests had come from the parishes to honor their Bishop. In that white flood of surplices with which the gratings overflowed shone the golden copes of the choristers and the red robes of the choir children. The eternal darkness of the lateral naves, beneath the weight of the Twelfth

Century chapels, was lighted up that morning by the limpid April sun, illuminating the stained glass windows, where a brazier of precious stones was reddening. But the gloom of the nave, especially, flamed with a swarm of wax candles, wax candles as numerous as the stars in a summer sky. In the centre the main altar was like a conflagration with them, the symbolical fiery bush burning with the fire of souls; and some were in candlesticks, on stands, in the chandeliers; and, in front of the spouses two tall candelabra, with round branches, appeared like two suns. Clumps of green plants changed the choir into a gay garden, which bloomed with great tufts of white azaleas, white camellias and white lilacs. As far as the depths of the arch sparkled vistas of gold and silver, glimpses of sections of velvet and of silk, a distant tabernacle dazzle amid the verdure. And, above this glow, the nave shot up, the four enormous pillars of the transept mounted to sustain the dome, in the trembling breath of these thousands of little flames which imparted a quiver to the full light of the lofty Gothic windows.

Angélique had decided to be married by the good Abbé Cornille, and when she saw him advancing in his surplice, with the white stole, followed by two clerks, she smiled. It was at last the realization of her dream; she espoused fortune, beauty and power beyond all hope. The church sang through its organs, shone through its candles, lived through its people of the faithful and the priests. Never had the antique interior been resplendent with a more sovereign pomp, as if broadened, in its sacred luxury, by an expansion of happiness. And Angélique smiled, knowing that she had death within her, in the midst of this joy,

celebrating her victory. On entering she had cast a glance at the Hauteœur Chapel, where slept Laurette and Balbine, the Happy Dead, borne away very young, in the full felicity of love. At this last hour she was perfect, victorious over her passion, corrected, renewed, no longer even having the pride of triumph, resigned to that flight of her being in the hosanna of her great friend, the cathedral. When she knelt, it was as a very humble and very submissive servant, entirely washed of the sin of origin; and she was also very gay because of her renunciation.

The Abbé Cornille, after having descended from the altar, made the exhortation in a kindly voice. He gave as an example the marriage which Jesus had contracted with the Church; he spoke of the future, of the days to live in the faith, of the children whom it would be imperative to bring up as Christians; and there again, in the face of that hope, Angélique smiled; while Félicien, beside her, quivered at the idea of all this happiness, which he now believed fixed. Then came the demands of the ritual, the responses which bind for the entire existence, the decisive "yes," which she pronounced, moved, from the depths of her heart, which he spoke louder, with a tender gravity. The irrevocable was done, the priest had put their right hands the one in the other, as he murmured the formula: "Ego conjungo vos in matrimonium, in nomine Patri, et Filii, et Spiritus sancti." But it remained to bless the ring, which is the symbol of inviolable fidelity, of the eternity of the bond; and that took time. In the silver basin, above the golden ring, the priest shook the sprinkler in the form of the cross. "Benedic, Domine, annulum hunc." Afterwards he presented it to the husband, to

testify to him that the Church closed and sealed his heart, where no other woman should enter more ; and the husband put it on the finger of the wife in order to teach her in her turn that he alone, among men, existed for her henceforth. It was the close union, without end, the sign of dependence borne by her, which would constantly recall to her the sworn faith ; it was also the promise of a long succession of years in common, as if that little circle of gold attached them until they reached the tomb. And, while the priest, after the final prayers, was exhorting them once more, Angélique wore her bright smile of renunciation—she who knew.

The organs then burst out joyously, behind the Abbé Cornille, who withdrew with the clerks. Monseigneur, motionless in his majesty, lowered upon the couple his eagle eyes, which were very mild. Still on their knees, the Huberts raised their heads, blinded by happy tears. And the enormous phrase of the organs rolled, lost itself in a hail of sharp little notes, raining beneath the arches, like the morning song of a lark. A long quiver, a tender hum had agitated the crowd of the faithful packed in the nave and the lateral naves. The church, decked with flowers, sparkling with wax candles, burst forth with the joy of the sacrament.

Then came two hours more of sovereign pomp, the mass sung, with the incensing. The celebrant had appeared, clad in the white chasuble, accompanied by the master of ceremonies, two incense-bearers, holding the censer and the pan, and two acolytes, bearing the tall golden chandeliers, lighted. And the presence of Monseigneur complicated the rite, the bows, the kisses. Every minute

inclinations and genuflexions made the wings of the surplices flap. In the old stalls flowered with sculpture all the chapter arose; and it was, at other instants, as if a breath from Heaven had at a blow prostrated the clergy, the throng of whom filled the arch. The celebrant sang at the altar. He paused, went and sat down, while the choir, in its turn, continued for a long while, grave phrases of the chorister, sharp notes of the choir child, light, airy, like archangel flutes. A voice, very beautiful, very pure, arose—a young girl's voice delicious to hear—the voice, they said, of Mademoiselle Claire de Voincourt, who had desired to sing at these nuptials of the miracle. The organs which accompanied her had a great softened sigh, the serenity of a good and happy soul. There were periods of sudden silence, then the organs burst forth anew in formidable rolls, while the master of ceremonies brought back the acolytes with their chandeliers, conducted the incense-bearers to the celebrant, who blessed the incense of the pans. And, at every moment, flights of the censer mounted, with the quick flash and the silvery sound of the little chains. An odorous mist grew blue in the air; they incensed the Bishop, the clergy, the altar, the Gospel, every person and everything in turn, even to the profound masses of the people, with three movements—to the right, to the left, and in front.

Meanwhile Angélique and Félicien, on their knees, listened devoutly to the mass, which is the mysterious consummation of the marriage of Jesus and the Church. They had put into the hand of each a burning candle, the symbol of the virginity preserved since the baptism. After the Lord's Prayer they had remained beneath the

veil, the sign of submission, shame and modesty, while the priest, standing beside the Epistle, read the prescribed prayers. They still held the burning candles, which are also a warning to think of death, even amid the joy of righteous nuptials. And it was finished, the offering was made, the celebrant went away, accompanied by the master of ceremonies, the incense-bearers and the acolytes, after having prayed God to bless the spouses, in order that they might see their children grow up and multiply until the third and the fourth generation.

At that moment the entire cathedral exulted. The organs began the triumphal march in such a burst of thunder that it made the old edifice tremble. Quivering, the crowd was on its feet, stood on tiptoe to see, women climbed upon chairs, there were compact rows of heads as far as the depths of the dark chapels of the collaterals ; and all these people smiled, with beating hearts. The thousands of wax candles, in this final adieu, seemed to burn higher, lengthening their flames, tongues of fire which flickered in the arches. A final hosanna of the clergy mounted amid the flowers and the verdure, amid the luxury of the ornaments and the sacred vases. But, suddenly, the main door, beneath the organs, thrown wide open, cut the sombre wall with a sheet of broad daylight. It was the bright April morning, the living sun of spring, the Place du Cloître with its gay white houses ; and there another crowd awaited the spouses, more numerous yet, of a sympathy more impartient, already agitated by gestures and acclamations. The wax candles had paled, the organs with their thunder covered the noises of the street.

And, with a slow step, between the double row of the

faithful, Angélique and Félicien went towards the door. After the triumph, she was emerging from the dream, she was walking down there to enter into reality. That porch of raw light opened upon the world of which she was ignorant; and she slackened her pace, she glanced at the active horses, at the tumultuous crowd, all that cheered her and saluted her. Her weakness was so great that her husband was compelled almost to carry her. Nevertheless, she still smiled, she thought of that princely hôtel, full of jewels and queenly toilets, where the nuptial chamber, all of white silk, awaited her. A suffocation arrested her, then she had the strength to make a few steps more. Her glance had encountered the ring passed upon her finger, she smiled on that eternal bond. Then, at the threshold of the main door, at the top of the steps which went down to the square, she staggered. Had she not gone to the end of happiness? Was it not there that the joy of being had finished? She raised herself up by a last effort, she put her mouth upon Félicien's mouth. And, in that kiss, she died.



But the death was without sadness. Monseigneur, with his habitual gesture of pastoral benediction, aided that soul to deliver itself, calmed himself, returned to the divine nothingness. The Huberts, pardoned, returning to existence, had the ecstatic sensation that a dream had finished. All the cathedral, all the town was enjoying the fête. The organs thundered louder, the bells rang tumultuously, the crowd cheered the loving couple on the threshold of the mystic church, beneath the glory of the spring sunlight. And it was a triumphal flying away, Angélique happy, pure, borne up, carried off in the realization of her dream,

snatched from the dark Twelfth Century chapels with flaming Gothic arches, amid the remains of gold and painting, to the complete paradise of the legends.

Félicien held only a very soft and very delicate nothing, that bride's dress, all of lace and pearls, the handful of light feathers, still warm, of a bird. For a long while he had clearly felt that he possessed a shadow. The vision, come from the invisible, had returned to the invisible. It was only an appearance, which had effaced itself, after having created an illusion. All is but a dream. And, at the height of happiness, Angélique had vanished in the light breath of a kiss.

THE END.

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
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
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